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JUSTIFICATION  
OF THE  
DISSENTERS  
AGAINST  
Mr. BENNET'S,

Charge of Damnable Schisme

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*By a Divine of the Church of England.*

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With a short

P R E F A C E

by another Hand.

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L O N D O N,

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OF THE  
DISSENTERS  
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By a Dismissal of the Church of England.

1791  
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Printed by J. Johnson, Strand, and J. B. Nichols, Pall Mall, London.  
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# P R E F A C E.

**T**He Reverend Author of this pacific Treatise, is not onely a sincere Member of the Church of England as by Law establish'd, but a very Useful and reputable Minister therein. He has been for many Tears a mournful Observer of those unhappy Contentions that have Rained the Glory, and threaten'd the Ruine of the Protestant Interest in England. It has alwaies been his Way to cultivate and maintain a cordial Friendship with sober and pious People of all Perswasions. And it cannot be doubted, but that he heartily wisbes all the Dissenters in the Nation, as well satisfied with the Termes of Conformity, as himself is, and has been for many Tears. And it is certaine he has not fail'd to use the most proper Endeavours to bring them over to his Judgement and Practice; and as his Methods have been much better adapted to such an End, than those violent ones that some others have been pleas'd to take, so his Success herein has been much greater than theirs.

But it is very evident, that the Long and intimate Acquaintance, which he has had with the Dissenters, the kind Visits, and the Prayers, and the Religious Conferences that he has been used to favour them with, as well as the rest of their Neighbours, and that truly Christian and Evangelic Temper of Souls that alwaies govern him, would never suffer him to fall into those new, narrow, Uncatholick Principles and Practices, which (if some Men might have had their Will) should have been before now the distinguishing Character, not onely of a true Church of England Man, but of a Christian too.

I must acknowledge I have no Commission from the Author of these Papers to say what it was that induc'd him to animadvert upon Mr. Bennet's Book against the Dissenters, I believe he is an utter Stranger to that Gentleman, and (tho' he were not so,) I dare say he would have no personal Pique, or prejudice against him. It must be acknowledged Mr. Bennet is an ingenious, polite and genteel Writer, and by what I have observed in his Way of managing the Controversy, he has rather been unhappy in his Education than in his Temper, he has too far imbib'd those modern Notions of Ecclesiastical Communion and Polity, which a singular Sort of Men, such as Mr. Dodwel, Dr. Parker, and a few more, have imperiously advanced, to serve the Humour and the Turne of the Times in which they wrote, and to excommunicate and damn the whole Body of Protestant Dissenters.

These Men vehemently assert a Political Legislative Power in every Diocesan Church, (and some of them extend it further) not onely to institute whatsoever rules or rites they please for Discipline and Worship, not directly forbidden in the Word of God, but when they have done so, to confine and appropriate all holy Communion with God and Christ, and the Saints, all federal Influence and Communications of the Divine Spirit, to the constant stated Subjection of all within such Precincts, to that Authority of that Church, and to a Conscientious Conformity to the Modes of its Worship.

This strange Doctrine, and its genuine Consequences, I do believe have given Offence to our Author, who plainly discerns therein a most dangerous and insolent Attempt to remove the ancient Landmarks of God's Inheritance, to make a Monopoly of his Favours, and to subject not onely the Souls of Men, but the Father of Spirits himself, to the Humours and Fancies of the Creature, as if God had made them Masters of the Ordinance, and he must now smile or frown, accept or refuse, save or destroy, as the inconstant Petu-

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# P R E F A C E.

Our Will of Man shall be pleased to order and direct. I would not aggravate Things, if this be not the just Consequence of ascribing such a Power to Men, and Confining the Communion of Saints to it, I should be glad to receive better Information.

The Reader will presently discern the Advantage our Author takes of Mr. Bennet's Concession, that there is no difference between Conformists and Dissenters, as to the Fundamentals and Essentials of Christianity, and how from that Honest (or at least unvary) Concession he endeavours to convince him of the Error and Inconsistency of those severe Censures he passes upon the Dissenters afterwards. Our Author is a true Lover of real Substantial Piety, and he lays the Stress of Mens Salvation there, as God himself has ever done. And I know not how than Mr. Bennet will be able to justify his general Charge of damnable Sin upon the Dissenters, unless he will say either that there can be no true Holiness out of the Pale of the Diocesan Church, or that if there should, yet for want of being found in that Inclosure when they dye, Persons really holy must be damned for ever, any thing to the Contrary in the Covenant of Grace notwithstanding.

The Author's way of writing is blunt and free, agreeable to the native Simplicity and Sincerity of the Man and his Communication, but I believe it will be found to be close and home, the Result of strong and serious Thoughts, the Design I am sure ought to recommend it to every Body, which is to prove, that tho' it is possible the Dissenters may be under a Mistake and in some Fault in their present Practice, yet it is no more than may consist with an Interest in Christ, and the Communion of Saints here, and with eternal Happiness hereafter.

If the Conformists and Non-Conformists agree in all the Essentials of Christianity, as Mr. Bennet acknowledges they do (and since he might acknowledge it without any straining of Courtesy) then they must Necessarily be both within the Essential Unity and Communion of the Church of Christ, and whatever is Faulty in the Difference between the one and the other, can onely be a Trespass upon the Purity or Order or Peace of the Church; and it must be acknowledged that such Faults may be great enough, and it concerns both sides to enquire seriously how far they are guilty, and if they would carry on the enquiry to good Purpose, the Purity and Order of the Church must submit to be examin'd by the Rule of Scripture, there being no other Rule in which both Parties agree, and as for that lovely and desirable Thing called Peace, the Practice and Behaviour of each Party will best determine who have the greatest Regard to it.

But then it will be expected, that the Conformists should not think the Dissenters are bound for Peace sake to comply with them, merely because the Conformists find themselves displeased and angry with the other for not doing so, they must not talk and write themselves into a Heat against their Dissenting Brethren, and then Plead such unhappy transports of their own, as an Obligation upon every Body else to say as they say, and do as they do, lest the Peace be broken, indeed if this be a Reason why the Dissenters should conform for Peace sake, the Conformists can never be at a loss for an Argument, since it is become now a Dayes so easy a thing for Persons to be angry with those that differ from them.

But if Men of all Perswasions amongst us would make this the principal Master of their Study and their Zeal, who shall come the nearest to the Rule of God's Word in Religious Worship and Practice, and who shall excell each other in a dispassionate, candid and peaceful Temper and Demeanor, this would presently and very seasonably put an End to a long unhappy Controversy.

# *A Justification of the Dissenters against Mr. Bennet's Charge of damnable Schism,*

## CHAP. I.

**T**HE Title of Mr. Bennet's Book against the Dissenters, the Second Edition, is, *A Discourse of Schism: shewing,*  
 1. *What is meant by Schism.* 2. *That Schism is a damnable Sin.*  
 3. *That there is a Schism between the establish'd Church of England and the Dissenters.* 4. *That this Schism is to be charged on the Dissenters side.* 5. *That the Modern Pretences of Toleration, Agreement in Fundamentals, &c. will not excuse the Dissenters from being guilty of Schism.*  
 This Discourse I purpose to examine, and I undertake to clear the Dissenters from this heavy Charge. And in order thereto I shall first take notice of one honest and necessary Concession, enough for my Cause. Mr. B. grants, and plainly asserts, That there is no opposition, nay, no difference as to Fundamentals, and Essentials, between the one and the other. If so, then though there be some faulty Schism between the two Parties, what ought not to be, yet it cannot be a damnable Schism; unless it can be made to appear that every kind of faulty Schism is damnable, and makes Persons otherwise Godly, lyable to endless Damnation. But this you no where prove, neither can: For a cordial Agreement in all Fundamentals includes a Cordial agreement in all things necessary to Salvation, to Holiness, to the Being and Unity of the Church; and where this is, and continues, there cannot possibly be damnable and antifundamental Schism. Thus by your own Concession, the Dissenters are upon the same Bottom and Foundation with your selves; if therefore they fall, you cannot stand; if you stand, they cannot but stand with you; if there be no Place in Heaven for them, there can be none for you; if they all be damned, so must also you all be damned. Certainly if they cordially agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals; then they are your dear Brethren in Christ, they are good Christians, and good Subjects, they agree with you in all things necessary to temporal and eternal Safety, and deserve to be treated at a better rate than they are; you owe unto them all Fundamental Rights, Priviledges, Liberties, Encouragements and Comforts. But ye should say, *Why persecute we him, Seeing the Root of the Matter is found in me?* Certainly a godly Dissenter and an  
 B Feb 19. 28.  
 ungodly

ungodly Dissenter differ in the very Foundation, and so do a godly Conformist and an ungodly Conformist. But a godly Dissenter and a godly Conformist agree in the Foundation, in far more than they differ, and both dying so they go to Heaven, and become Members of the Church Triumphant, and consequently when on Earth they could not but be true and living Members of the Church Militant.

p. 122.  
163. CHAP. 2. Mr. B. being pressed with this, hath no better Answer than this very impotent one, *That the Profession of the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion do's indeed make a Man no Heretick; but it do's not make him no Schismatick. For, Schism is not a Denial of Fundamentals, but a Breach of Church-Peace and Love; and we find by daily Experience, that he who professes all the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion may cause such a Breach, and raise a Disturbance in the Church.*

171. 1. 16. If a Man externally profess all Fundamentals, and it cannot be perceived that he is unsound in his Profession, he is no Heretick before Men who do not see and know what is in his Heart inwardly. But if God see and know him to be inwardly wicked and unsound in his Profession, then he is a kind of Heretick in the Sight of God: for he doth practically deny him, and he that practically denys God; doth practically deny all the Fundamentals of true Religion. *They profess that they know God, but in Works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good Work reprobate.* All such are very Hereticks, Schismaticks, Infidels, practical Atheists. But if a Man be a sincere Professor of all Fundamentals, and so continue, he cannot possibly be a Schismatick, chargeable with anti-fundamental and damnable Schism, though he may be spotted with a lower kind of Schism. Though every faulty Schism be not Heresie, yet every Soul-destroying and Church-destroying Schism is very Heresie. Every Heresie is necessarily Schismatical, and every Soul-destroying Schism is necessarily Heretical. For the Peace of the Church consists in being one in Judgment, Affection, and Conversation with all the Saints on Earth, as to all Foundation-truths, Graces and Duties; and Christian Love consists in loving God as God, and all godly Christians as such. Without some Degree of this Church-peace and Christian Love there can be no Church of real Saints inwardly, no true Godliness. A Church altogether destitute of Church-peace and Love, is a Church of Hypocrites, God-hating and Saint-hating men, the principal Thing is wanting. Church-peace and Love are Fundamentals; where Church-peace and Love are not, there is no lively Faith, no sound and fruitful Belief in God, there is no good Foundation for eternal Life. But many Things may weaken Church-peace and Love, and yet not quite extinguish them; and if Church-peace and Love be not extinguished, but only weakened, there is no damnable and  
anti-

antifundamental Schism. *M. B.* says, *Believe*, *St. Paul* tells us, that there was a Schism between the several Parties at Corinth, 1 Cor. 1. and yet all those Parties were Christians, and consequently did all agree in Fundamentals. But either that supposed Schism at Corinth was destructive of Church-unity, or not. If yea, then there was no sound agreement in Fundamentals, and an unsound Agreement is simply no Agreement, as a dead Man is not simply a Man, but a Corpse. If no, then it could not be damnable and Soul-ruining Schism, but *151d* another kind of Schism, faulty it was, but not the highest Kind of Schism.

*CHAP. 3.* *Mr. B.* adds, *And you know there was, and is, a Schism between the Presbyterians and Independents; and yet they did, and do, agree in Fundamentals; for otherwise they would not be Christians. From which Instances 'tis plain, that there may be a Schism between those who agree in Fundamentals.* I grant that *de facto* there may be a kind of faulty Schism between those who agree in Fundamentals, and are godly Christians, but not the highest kind of Schism; a cordial Agreement in Fundamentals is not consistent with Soul-ruining Schism. If therefore the Presbyterians and Independents be both godly Christians, and cordially agree in Fundamentals, then what Breach and Schism is between them cannot be Anti-fundamental and Damnable. But if they be not godly Christians, and cordially agreed in Fundamentals, then simply they are no Christians, simply they do not agree in Fundamentals. For though ungodly Christians are *Secundum quid*, Christians; yet *simpliciter*, they are not Christians. All ungodly Christians in *England*, whether they be Conformists, or Dissenters; whether they be Presbyterians or Independents, do, by *Reigning Unbelief and Ungodliness* inwardly disjoin and separate themselves from the Grace of Christ, and the Love of God, and the Communion of the holy Ghost, and the Society of militant Saints, and inwardly join themselves to the Synagogue of *Satan*, and are one with all the wicked on Earth in Ungodliness and Soul-destroying Abominations. But all godly Conformists and all godly Dissenters in *England*, though they do not agree so fully, perfectly and comfortably as is to be wisht; yet they agree in the main, they are all godly in Christ Jesus, they are one with God, and with all the Holy Ones in Heaven and Earth, as to all those Things that be necessary to Holiness, to Salvation, to Church-Society; none of them are Schismatics, and chargeable with damnable and Soul-ruining Schism. But all the ungodly Ones in *England*, whether Conformists or Non-Conformists, are truly chargeable with damnable and Soul-ruining Schism. For though there be divers kinds of ungodly Ones in *England*, and they are not all alike ungodly, but some more, and some less; yet as *Herod* and *Pilate* did both unite against Christ, though before they had been at variance; so all un-

godly ones in *England* unite in ungodliness and Soul-ruining Courses! *Ungodliness* is practical Atheism, a Complication of heinous Sins, it destroys the Soul, and shuts out of Heaven, unless it be cured in Time by renewing and pardoning Grace. And that which destroys the Soul, and shuts out of Heaven, must needs destroy the Church and the Unity thereof, what can it be but Soul-ruining Heresie and Schism?

*CHAP. 4.* If your Arguments against the Dissenters prove *any Thing*, they prove *too much*, more a great Deal than you would have them to prove, they prove that God hath no Church in *England*; no Church in *England*, no Church on Earth; no Church on Earth, no Truth in God's Word; no Truth in God's Word, no God; no God, no Man, no Creature, nothing but Atheism, and Confusion of all Things. Here then, *Mr. Bennet*, I contend against you by this *Dilemma*, Either the Dissenters agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals, or they do not. You must needs either affirm, or deny; but whether you affirm, or deny, you cannot but miscarry in your Cause, and the Truth cannot but be victorious over you. 1. If you own that the Dissenters agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals, then you agree that they are one with you in all the Essentials and Fundamentals of Personal Holiness, and Family-Holiness, and Congregation-Holiness, and Town and Parish-Holiness, and National, Provincial and Diocess-Holiness, both in time of Peace, and in time of War. By this Concession you own their Ministers to be true Gospel-Ministers, their Ordination valid, their Congregations to be true Christian Assemblies, their way of Worship to be true and good for the main, no one Essential being wanting. Thus you undo your Cause, and confute your own Book, and all your Proofs and Allegations, That the Dissenting Ministers are no true Ministers, but Usurpers; that their Ordination is null and invalid; that they are Schismatics, and walk in the Way of damnable and antifundamental Schism, are made void by your own Concession. 2. If you shall deny that they agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals, then you contradict your own express Concessions and repeated Affirmations, and you open a wide Door for practical Atheism, Infidelity, Irreligion and Anti-Christianism, and it cannot be solidly proved that God hath a true Church, a true Ministry, a faithful People in *England*. For as if the Dissenters be Brutes and no Men, so the Conformists also must needs be Brutes and no Men. In like manner if the Dissenters do not hold the Foundation, if they do not agree in all Fundamentals, it cannot be proved what Fundamentals are, what Christianity is, what Holiness is, what the Church is, what is the Way to Heaven, all the Conforming Clergy and Laity must be concluded to be upon a wrong Foundation, to be practical Atheists, Infidels, Hereticks, ungodly Schismatics. This kind of Doctrine will please the Devil well.

*CHAP.*

CHAP. 3. Mr. B. tells us, *The Word Schism signifies Division, and consequently every Division, of what sort soever it be, may be called a Schism. But in our present Controversy the Word - - - is taken in a limited Sense, and signifies a Division of Christians, a Breach of that outward Church-union, or Communion in Love and Peace, which ought to be practised by them.* This which you say is true, but not the whole Truth, nor the principal Thing. For bare outward Church-union and Communion may be, and frequently, ordinarily is, as to very many that are unsound Christians, without internal Piety; and where is no internal Piety, the principal Thing is Lacking. Is the Breach and Destruction of internal Union and communion with God and his Saints in Soul-Saving ways and Courses, no Schism, no faulty Division? Rather this is the highest kind of Criminal Schism and Division being persisted in. It is plain that Church-unity consisteth chiefly in internal Union and Communion with God in Christ, and with all the Saints on Earth, in - - Soul-Saving ways, and in external Acts of Church-Communion so far as they are Subservient to internal Piety, and conduce to heavenly Profit and Advantage. For the Church Militant is *Species Specialissima*, the most special Society, differing in kind and Substance from every other Society on Earth; and therefore the Schism which is repugnant to, and inconsistent with the Being and Unity thereof, is a special kind of Schism, a transcendent Vice, destructive of Christian Faith, and Hope, and Love: which three Conjunct are to the Church, and to every sound Part and Member thereof, what the Soul is to the Body; as the Soul is the Life of the Body, so godly Sincerity is the Life of the Church. External Communion in the Word and Prayer and Sacraments publickly, is a Thing common to good and bad Christians, & therefore it cannot be the Thing wherein Church-Unity and the Communion of Saints doth principally consist. But Church-Communion doth consist principally in being of *one Heart*, and of *one Way*, with all militant Saints, in internal precious Faith, and Hope, and Love, in all such Things as be necessary to Salvation. Now this doth connote and include external Communion in the Word and Prayer and Sacraments, as we have call and opportunity. But many a one that keeps himself from external Criminal Schism, is inwardly ungodly, and where is inward Ungodliness, there is inward Soul-ruining Schism, dis-union with God and the Church Militant, and Union with the Devil and his Party in Soul-undoing and God-dishonouring ways. And many a godly Christian having vital Union and Communion with God and the Church Universal, in Soul-Saving Mercies, and happily preserved from damnable and Soul-ruining Schism, may yet through Ignorance, unperceived Error and Infirmity, be defiled with a *lower kind* of Schism, and die in it, and be saved upon a general Repentance of all unknown Sins and Errors. Let us for argument sake suppose not one Dissenter in England,

*England*, but all in the Nation Conformists, would there now be no damnable Schism, no God-provoking and Soul-ruining Division? Certainly there are many ungodly Conformists, and all ungodly Sinners are inwardly separated from God and the Church Militant, and inwardly joined to the Synagogue of Satan, and so they are guilty of damnable Schism. *Their Heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.* The Hearts of all ungodly Conformists are divided and separated from God, and the way of Holiness, and the Communion of Saints, as to internal Graces and Soul-saving Mercies; and so they are inwardly wicked Schismatics and Separatists, and so are all ungodly Dissenters, but so are no godly Persons, whether Dissenters or Conformists. Thus you clearly mistake the Nature of Schism, and this Mistake makes you to err throughout your whole Book, as to the Scope of it, and the Substance of the Controversie.

**CHAP. 6.** We learn from the Holy Scripture, That every ungodly Person *separateth himself from the Lord, and setteth up his Idols in his Heart.* This is the dangerous and damnable Separation and Schism, whereby an ungodly and graceless Sinner doth at once forsake and separate himself from Christ dwelling, living and working by precious Faith in his Saints, and doth inwardly join himself to the Devil, and becomes one with all wicked Ones in ungodly and Soul-destroying Courses. Not every faulty Schism, and Breach of Church-unity, but only that Schism, and that Breach of Church-unity which doth disjoin the Soul from God and the Way of Holiness, and doth join it to the Synagogue of Satan, and expelleth a godly Life, and carrieth with it an Enmity against the Power of Godliness, and the Spirit of Holiness and Purity in all the Saints on Earth; this is the damnable and antifundamental Sin and Separation, from which all godly Dissenters and Conformists are free. Mr. B. says, *The Church of Christ is the whole Society of Men professing the Faith of Christ, being united to him their common Head, and to one another, as Members of each other.* But either this is no good Description of the Church, or if it be, it makes for the Dissenters against you: For all godly Dissenters profess the Faith of Jesus Christ, and they are by lively Faith united to him their common Head, and to all the living Members of his mystical Body by Love, and are one with all godly Conformists in Soul-saving Ways and Courses. But many Dissenters and Conformists profess the Faith of Christ, and are not sincere in their Profession, and lacking godly Sincerity they are inwardly united to the Devil their common Head, Captain and Leader, and disjoined from Christ. Mr. B. says, *The Church is the Body of Christ; and since 'tis absurd to suppose, that the Church is a natural Body, therefore it must be a political one.* But this is a Mistake; for though the Church be the Body of Christ,

Christ, yet it is neither a natural Body, nor a political one, but the mystical Body of Christ. For a political Body is a civil and temporal Society common to Christians and Heathens; the Church is clearly no such Society, for it is the Society of redeemed Saints beginning in Regeneration, carryed on by persevering Grace, and compleated in Heaven, where it is everlasting. Thus you mistake the Nature of the Church, and this Error, that the Church is a political Society, hath been a great Snare to you all along in this Controversie.

CHAP. 7. Mr. B. says, *The Church of Christ is a Spiritual Society, or Spiritual Body Politick, govern'd by its Supreme Head or Ruler, Jesus Christ.* But that Word *Politick*, is an Inconsistency; for as is the Head, so must needs be the Body. Christ is the Head of the Church in a heavenly, spiritual and mystical Sense, but not in a political Sense. For the Queen, under God, is Political Head and Supreme Ruler by the Sword over all the Souls in the Nation, and consequently over all the Clergy and Layety therein; like as King Saul was by Divine Appointment the Head of the Tribes of Israel, one whereof was the Tribe of Levi. If also Christ be Political Head of all the Clergy and Layety in England, then what difference can there be between Christ who is the Eternal God, and the Queen who is a mortal Woman? Moreover, when you tell us, That *the Church of Christ is govern'd by its Supreme Head or Ruler, Jesus Christ*; doth not this imply another Head of the Church Universal, that is subordinate? and what can that be but a Pope, or Deputy-Christ, a Deceiver? The Universal Church on Earth is not ruled partly by Christ as Supreme Head, and partly by the Pope, or by the Clergy in Synod, or out of Synod, as subordinate Head; but Christ only is the sole Head, Lord and King of the Universal Church, and his Kingdom ruleth over all intellectual Creatures for the same Church, which is his mystical Body; the Being, and Unity, and Happiness whereof is not partly from Christ, and partly from the Creature, but from Christ alone, as *All in all*. For Christ is God, and God is infinitely and immutably perfect, and therefore no Effect can be partly from him, and partly from the Creature, but he *worketh All in all*; and though he make use of Instruments, and Means, and subordinate Agents, yet they add no Perfection to God; the Effect produced is not partly from God as Supreme, and partly from the Creature and Means as subordinate, but from God alone as *All in all*, that so we might glory in him, and not in any meer Creature. Mr. B. says, *The inferiour Governours under Christ our Supreme Head, are called the Clergy.* But Christ is sole Head of the Universal Church, and though Pastors and Teachers have an Office in the Church, and it belongeth to them to rule and govern it by the Word of Christ, yet they are not Lords, but Stewards of

P. 5.

1 Sam. 15. 17.

Col. 3. 11.

1 Cor. 15.

28.

1 Cor. 12.

P. 6.

of the Myſteries of God, in the Church only his Voice is to be heard; it is not governed partly by Chriſt as Supreme, and partly by the Clergy as Subordinate, but only by Chriſt as *All in all*.

P. 8. 10. *CHAP. 8.* Mr. B. ſays, *The Peace of the Church is broken and deſtroyed, when the Layety do reſuſe Subjection to their proper Miniſters, and adhere to others in oppoſition to them.* The Layety owe abſolute and entire Subjection to Jeſus Chriſt, and to his Goſpel taught by Paſtors, and they owe civil Subjection to *Cæſar* as ſupreme Ruler by the Sword; but they owe no Subjection to their proper Miniſters, becauſe Miniſters have no governing Supremacy in God's Church, we are not the Biſhops Subjects, but the Queens Subjects. If therefore Miniſters claim a Sovereignty and Domination over us as their Subjects, herein they act as uſurping Popes, and not as Goſpel-miniſters, they make themſelves guilty of dangerous *Schiſm*; we are to adhere to God and the Queen againſt all ſuch Papal Uſurpation and Unjuſt Domination. Mr. B. ſays, *in the Church of Chriſt there are many great numbers of Chriſtians, whom we call National Churches, and theſe National Churches are to be governed in Spiritual Matters by their reſpective Clergy.* But either there is no ſuch thing as a National Church appointed by Chriſt: Or if there be, the Diſſenters will be found to be a true and ſound Part thereof, as agreeing in all Eſſentials and Fundamentals with the Conformiſts. You all along in your book have this Phraſe and Form of Speech, *The Church of England*; this you Count, and call the eſtabliſhed Church as diſtinct from the Diſſenters, and by way of oppoſition to them. But this is a great miſtake, it is your *primum falſum* in this Controverſy. There are but two great Societies in *England*, the Church of God, and the Synagogue of Satan, like as there are but two great Maſters, God and Satan. All ſuch in *England*, as believing in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, renounce the way of Sin, and chuſe the way of truth, and live juſtly, ſoberly and godly in the World, in hope of eternal Salvation by Chriſt, theſe together with regenerate Infants are the Church of God in *England*, conſiſting of all the godly Diſſenters and all the godly Conformiſts in *England*; beſides theſe there are another contrary Society of ungodly Diſſenters and ungodly Conformiſts and other ungodly ones in *England*, and theſe are the Synagogue of Satan. As we read in Scripture of *the Churches of Galatia, the Churches of Judea, the Churches of Macedonia.* So we ought to ſay, the Churches of *England*, for in *England* are many thouſands of particular viſible Churches, wherein God's Word is taught, and the Sacraments are diſpenſed, in ſome Congregations more purely and edifyingly, in others leſs. But either God is graciously preſent in the Diſſenting Congregations, or he is not graciously preſent in the Conformiſts Congregations: for they both agree in

Gal. 1

2. Cor. 8.

in all Essentials and Fundamentals, both have their Weaknesses and Defects, in both the Substance of saving Truth is taught, heard, believed and reduced to holy Practise by very many on both sides, who are hated and inwardly opposed by the Devil, and all anti-fundamental Sects, and by the ungodly ones of every party.

**CHAP. 9.** If you speak of civil and temporal Establishment, the Dissenters now are not without that, they have an Act of Parliament, the Act of Toleration, which gives them a legal impunity *in foro externo & civili*. If you speak of a Divine and Heavenly Establishment *in foro interno & Spirituali*, upon your own Principle & Concession they must needs have that as truly as the Conformists, both sides agreeing in all Essentials and Fundamentals. Why then do you all along count and call your selves the established Church of England exclusively of the Dissenters? *The visible Church of Christ, is a Congregation of faithfull men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministred, according to Christ's Ordinance, in all those Things that of necessity are requisite to the same.* This Part of the 19th Article of Religion is subscribed by both sides, and it gives a sound Description of the visible Church, and according to this Description the Dissenting Congregations are true Churches of England, if the Conforming Congregations be true Churches of England: either both, or neither are proved, warranted and established by this Article. But the visible Church of England as distinct from all the visible Churches of England, is indeed no true Church of God, but an Imagination. For as the national Town of England distinct from all the Towns of England, is a meer Fiction: & as the national School of England distinct from all the Shools of England, is a non-ens: so the national Church of England as distinct from all the Churches of England, is a meer Dream. Jesus Christ is sole invisible Head of all godly Christians in England, whether Dissenters or Conformists: the Devil is sole invisible Head of all ungodly Ones in England, whether Dissenters or Conformists or others. Under Christ the Queen is sole visible Head and supreme Ruler by the Sword over all the Souls in Her Dominions. No meer humane Law can create a true Church of God and a Divine Establishment. Pious Conformists and pious Dissenters considered as pious, are a Divine Establishment, they both subsist by and stand upon one and the same Divine Foundation. Impious Conformists, and impious Dissenters considered as impious, are Brethern in iniquity, like a House built upon the Sand, they are Children of the Devil, and Heirs of Hell, and if so they die there can be no Hope of -- them.

**CHAP. 10.** Mr. B. says, *The whole Controversy turns upon the Determination of this single Question, whether the established Church does impose any one unlawfull Term of Lay-Communion, or no.* Here you set aside the Point of Clergy-Conformity, and suppose the Discussion there

of not necessary in the present Controversy. But herein you are much mistaken: for in the Judgment of the Dissenters, Clergy-Conformity is unlawfull before God. And if really it be so, then all the Nation is bound so to judge, and to adhere to the Dissenting Ministers as the innocent Party, as not only valid Ministers, but better made Ministers than the Conformists, and all the Conform. Clergy are bound forthwith to repent of their Sin in Conforming, and to turn Non-Conformists, and the ruling Powers of the Nation are bound to abolish the Laws for Conformity, and to honour God and the Cause of injured, oppressed, and persecuted Non-Conformity by national Repentance, and so the Substance of your Book against the Dissenters, and your imputing to them damnable Schism, is made void, and the Schism lies at your Door. Though the Layety are not to answer for the Personal Sins of Ministers, yet they are not to approve them, they are to hate and mourn for them, and prefer innocent before Criminal Clergy-Men, and honour those who honour God, and forsake such as forsake God, where it can be perceived that they forsake him. You add, *If the established Church does impose any one unlawfull Term of Lay-Communion with her, doubtless she is Schismatical, and the Separation of the Dissenters is not only Lawfull, but necessary. But if the established Church does not impose any one unlawfull Term of Lay-Communion with her; then 'tis utterly impossible for the Dissenters to justify their Separation from her.* But it is your great mistake in this Controversy, to count your selves the established Church exclusively of the Dissenters. Whereas it is plain, and that upon your own Grounds, that they are *Sano Sensu* a Part of the established Church. For your Concession that they agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals, proves against you that they are a Divine Establishment as truly as your selves: and the Act of Toleration is an undeniable Proof that they are a civil and humane Establishment, and what more is your Party? But though all the Terms of Lay-Communion with you be supposed lawfull, yet that is not enough for your Cause, unless also they be necessary and expedient. For where are two Congregations at Hand, one Dissenters, & the other Conformists, If Communion in this latter be supposed lawfull but not expedient, and Communion in the other is both lawfull and expedient, it can be no fault to join with that which is both lawfull and expedient -- rather than that which is barely lawfull, but not expedient. But you shew unreasonable Stiffness by rigid adhering to what is barely lawfull, rather than to what is both lawfull and expedient. *All Things are lawfull for me, but all Things are not expedient.*

*The Pref.* *2 Cor. 10. 23.* CHAP. 11. Mr. B. adds, *This ought to be very carefully considered by those Dissenters, who (to gain an Office, or the like) will join in our Communion. On which side soever the Schism is to be charged, I am sure this practice is utterly inconsistent. For if the Terms of our Lay-Communion are*

not Sinfull, 'tis a damnable Sin to separate from our Communion: But if they are Sinfull, 'tis a damnable Sin to join so much as ones in our Communion. If indeed the two Parties did differ as the Worshippers of God & the Worshippers of Baal, as the Way to Heaven & the Way to Hell, as the Church of Christ and the Synagogue of Satan, then your arguing could not but be good and strong. But it being plain that they are Sister-Churches and Congregations agreeing in the Foundation, that quite alters the Case, and breaks the Neck of your Argument. Their joyning with you once, may be a Duty, and yet it may not be their Duty to joyn with you constantly, unless the same Causes, Grounds and Reasons continue. If in doing what is lawfull they mix by-ends, then they do amiss, not because what they do is unlawfull, but because in doing it they have Sinister Aims, and do not uprightly serve God, but basely serve themselves of God, which is very abominable. I confess it hath been long my practice, and still is, to join with both sides in their Congregations, as I have opportunity, I do it not to gain an Office, or for the like worldly Motive, but purely upon a Christian Account, as thinking it my Duty after the Example of Christ and his holy Apostles to be all Things to all Men for their good to Edification, and to make the Communication of my Faith become effectual by the Acknowledging of every good Thing, which is in Pious Conformists and Pious Dissenters in Christ Jesus. I know nothing I get hereby but hard Names and Censures, and being ill thought of by many, whom I take no Pleasure in offending. But it is one Thing to offend erring Men by doing our Duty, and another thing to offend both God & Men by doing what is ill: this latter is great Sin, and therefore carefully to be shunned; the former is the necessary Service of God, and therefore zealously to be done and performed. No Man more peremptory & inflexible than Paul, where the Truth of the Gospel was concerned, there he would not yield a jot, nor twerpe a Hair's breadth: but in other Matters, in Things indifferent and *libera observationis*, no Man more yielding and complying than he.

CHAP. 12. Mr. B. hath one Chapter - to prove that Schism is a damnable Sin: and another to prove that it is so, in the Judgment of the present Dissenting Ministers. He says, Schism (as we learn from the Teachers of your own Party) is a Sin of the blackest Nature, and the deepest Die: 'Tis that which is utterly inconsistent with Christianity; and not only a bar to our Entrance into Heaven, but that which will most assuredly destroy our Souls in Hell-Flames. I grant that there is one kind of Schism which is destructive of Christianity and Salvation; but I do utterly deny that every Kind of faulty Schism is so, and there is not any Thing in all your Book that proves it. But you by honest and necessary Granting that both sides agree in all the Fundamentals of Christianity, undo your Cause: for certainly an Agreement in all

all the Fundamentals of Christianity cannot but preserve Persons from all such Schism as is antifundamental and inconsistent with Christianity. You say, *I need not tell you, that all Sin is damnable, for this is granted on all Hands. - A Sin, whether it be great or small, is certainly damnable: and one kind of Sin will damn as soon as another, tho' not to the same degree of Damnation.* But certainly Sin repented of and -- pardoned doth differ in Kind and Substance from Sin unrepented of and unpardoned: otherwise there can be no difference between Penitent and Impenitent Ones, pardoned Saints and unpardoned Sinners, and so the Gospel is overthrown. All Sin unrepented of and unpardoned, is certainly damnable, and will produce endless Damnation, if persisted in without Gospel-Repentance and Pardon. But no Sin truly repented of, mortified and pardoned will damn.

Rom. 8.1. *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* If indeed God should be extream to mark Iniquity, and deal with the holiest Men on Earth by way of strict Justice without Grace and Mercy in Christ, we were all undone, and no one of fallen Mankind could be saved:

Eccles. 7. *for there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* But God cannot so deale with any of his Saints, because they are not under the Law, but under Grace, and God stands engaged by his holy Promise in Christ freely to pardon, adopt and save all the Evangelically Penitent, which Promise God cannot but most freely perform. And therefore though in every godly Man upon Earth there be some Sin, that dwelleth in him: yet it is involuntary, lamented, mortified in some measure, fore against his Will, and so it is imputable to his mercifull temporal Castigation, but not to his eternal Condemnation, it differs in kind from wilfull, reigning and unimortified Sin in all the ungodly. There was a Breach and faulty Schism between Paul and Barnabas, and the Contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other. And yet no considerate Christian will say that this sudden and short Schism between two so holy Men and eminent Ministers was a Sin of the blackest Nature, and the deepest Die, and destructive of Salvation.

Act. 15. *CHAP. 13. Mr. B. Says, it appears, that either we of the Church of England, or those of your Persuasion, are most certainly Schismatics.* This doth not appear, but the contrary doth appear: for it is manifest that there are very many godly Dissenters, and very many godly Conformists, Cordially agreeing in all Fundamentals, and consequently neither of them are Schismatics, chargeable with antifundamental and damnable Schism, and yet I deny not but there may be, and is a lower kind of Schism between them. Indeed all ungodly Dissenters are Schismatics, not because they are Dissenters, but because they are ungodly, and do not walk in those holy ways that godly Dissenters and godly Conformists do:

and

and all ungodly Conformists are Schismaticks, not because they are Conformists, but because they are ungodly, and do not walk in those holy ways that godly Dissenters and godly Conformists do; For a Schismatick is one who doth by a carnal mind and wicked life separate himself inwardly from Communion with God and all his Saints in Soul-saving ways, and doth inwardly join himself to the Devil and the Society of Saint-hating and Soul-destroying Sinners. This is the Case of every ungodly Man and Woman in England, whether Conformist or Dissenter, till they repent and become godly in Christ Jesus. What St. *Augustine* says, touching Heresie, *Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo.* that may each godly Man say touching Schism, *Errare possum, Schismaticus esse nolo.* For there cannot be true Godliness but there must needs be internal and vital Union and Communion with Christ the Head, and with all the Saints in Heaven and Earth, who are his mystical Body, as to all Fundamental and Soul-saving Truth and Piety, and consequently no Damnable Schism, no Soul-ruining Errour and Mispractice. But the Understanding, Will, Memory, Conscience, Affections and Conversation of every ungodly Man whether Dissenter or Conformist, are damnably corrupt and unholy, there is no truth and Soundness in him toward God and his People. *Curse ye Me-roz;* (*Said the Angel of the Lord*) *Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the Lord against the Mighty.* All the ungodly ones in England, whether Dissenters or Consenters, fall under this Curse, because they do not take part with God and all the godly every where against the Devil and Soul-destroying ungodliness. Christ plainly says, *He that is not with me, is against me.* Now no ungodly Christian is with Christ against ungodliness, though outwardly and verbally he may seem to be with Christ, yet inwardly and really he is against him, he is on the Devil's side against Christ, and consequently he is against God, and against the Church of God, and against holy Unity and Concord, choosing rather to perish in his Sins, than to be saved from them in the way of Gospel-repentance and holy obedience. This is the Heretic, the Schismatick, the practical Atheist. But there is no Godly Man wholly free from all faulty Schism and Division. For there is some Involuntary and Lamented Sin, even in the best of militant Saints, which though it doth not extinguish holy Union with God and his People, yet it doth hinder its perfection, and keeps it that 'tis not for measure so great and full as it should be, and as it will be in Heaven for ever, where is no kind of Sin.

CHAP. 14. In every godly Man on Earth there is a continual Conflict or Combat between the Spirit and the Flesh, between Faith and lamented Unbelief, between the new Man and involuntary Relicks of the old Man, between Humility and Pride

not

not perfectly mortified, and consequently between Unity and Schism. For the *Flesh* lusteth against the *Spirit*, and the *Spirit* against the *Flesh*: and these are contrary the one to the other. Hence holy Paul concludes, So then, with the *Mind* I myself serve the *Law* of God; but with the *Flesh*, the *Law* of Sin. Thus it is plain that in every godly Man on Earth there are *Sano Sensu* two contrary Principles, Spirit and Flesh, Faith and Unbelief, Holiness and Sin: this Contrariety cannot be without Division, and where is Division there is Schism. If therefore every faulty Schism be a Sin of the blackest Nature, and the deepest Die, and Utterly inconsistent with a State of Salvation, then all godly Men are ungodly, and so dying they must needs be both saved and damned for ever, this Consequence is unavoidable upon Mr. B. his Principles. Certainly every holy Man on Earth loves God as God, and all godly Persons as such in some Measure sincerely, but not so perfectly and abundantly as he could desire: the holy Union between God and him, and between him and all other Saints is not for Degree and Quantity so great and full as it should be, and as he could desire, and as it will be in Heaven: and so while he is on Earth there is in him invincible Weakness, involuntary Sin and Schism, which is truly and properly Sin and Schism *Secundum quid*, but not *simpliciter*: it is Matter of Humiliation, but not of eternal Condemnation, and so he is free from Damnable and Soul-ruining Sin and Schism, and is no Schismatick. But every ungodly Christian is a Schismatick, not outwardly, but inwardly: not because he is a Christian, but because he is ungodly, and contents himself with bare external Christianity without inter-

nal Piety and godly Sincerity. *Your Iniquities have separated between you and your God*; The godly Dissenter cannot be against Christ Dwelling, Living, and Working by precious Faith in godly Conformists, but he must needs be against himself, and undermine his own Cause: and *vice versa* the godly Conformist cannot be against Christ Dwelling, Living, and Working by precious Faith in godly Dissenters, but he must needs be against himself, and undermine his own Cause. And yet it is too apparent that there is a Breach and faulty Schism between the Godly of either side. I determine not whether side is in the Right, a Breach there is, a faulty Schism there is between them, but well consistent with Church-Unity, it doth indeed weaken it, but not extinguish it.

**CHAP. 15.** We must not be more severe than God, he doth not like and approve what is amiss in any of his Saints: and yet he doth not for some undiscerned lesser Error, and invincible Infirmitie well consistent with godly Sincerity, deny them to be Saints, count them none of his Children, but Children of the Devil, and profane Schismatics, he doth not impute unto them damnable Schism: but they are precious in his Sight, and dear unto him, and he

he is infinitely tender of them, and gives them Grace and Glory, the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that to come. *He feeds* *Isa. 40. 11.* *his Flock like a Shepherd: he gathers the Lambs with his Arm, and carries them in his Bosom, and gently leads those that are with Young.* The Devil and his Adherents be against Godliness in all pious Dissenters and in all pious Conformists, and Christ and all that be cordially on his side are for Godliness in all pious Conformists, and pious Dissenters impartially against the Kingdom of the Devil. Suppose ye that I am come to give Peace on Earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather Division. For *Luk. 12.* *from henceforth there shall be five in one House divided, three against two, and two against three. The Father shall be divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father: the Mother against the Daughter, and the Daughter against the Mother: the Mother-in-Law against her Daughter-in-Law, and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law.* Here Christ is the Author of a good and blessed Schism, Division and War against the Devil and Soul-destroying wickedness. Christ having planted Divine Faith and Love in the Heart of this or that Convert, now he is happily disjoined from Satan and the ungodly World, and joined to the Lord, and to the Church Militant and Triumphant: from henceforth he is divided against the Society of Wicked ones and the Devil their Captain, and so he is *Sano Sensu* a blessed Schismatick, a happy Separatist: henceforth the Devil and his Party the Society of God-hating and Saint-hating Sinners are divided against him, and so they are cursed Schismaticks. But with this Difference, there is no Hope of the Devil's Conversion, no Possibility of his Salvation: but there is of the Conversion and Salvation of ungodly Sinners on Earth.

**CHAP. 16.** Mr. B. says of indifferent Things, *if they may law-fully be used in Divine Worship, when imposed by the Church; -- certainly 'tis not your Business or mine, to seek any farther. Because 'tis our Governours Place to determine, whether they shall be imposed, or no.* But certainly it is the Duty of every Gospel-Minister and private Christian, in their several Places, to be against the Imposing of Things Indifferent and Unnecessary in Divine Worship. Our Governors have Power to impose Things necessary and expedient in Gods Worship, but not Things unnecessary & inexpedient, though they be not unlawfull: for all their Power is given them for Edification, and not for Destruction; for the Benefit of the Church, and not for its Hurt. But when by arbitrary Will they impose Things indifferent and no way necessary in God's Worship, they misuse --- their Power, Grieve the Church, Offend the Weak, Occasion causeless Separation in such as by Errour judge the Things imposed not indifferent, but Sinfull, and Act contrary to the Wisdom of the holy Ghost and the blessed Apostles. *For it seemed good to the holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater Burden than these necessary Things.* Things necessary

p. 158.

rary and Things indifferent differ in Kind, as what ought to be done, and what may innocently be left undone. It never seemed good to the holy Ghost, and to the infallibly guided Apostles, to impose Things no way necessary. But Things indifferent are no way necessary. But against this Mr. B. tells us, *They were therefore necessary Orders for that Juncture: but all of them were not always necessary.* 'Tis plain therefore, that the Apostles, &c. injoin'd indifferent Things, and called them Necessary too, that is, necessary to be practis'd, because impos'd. And consequently this Text is a clear Precedent for the Imposition of indifferent Things. But the contrary is plain: for though some of the Things imposed were not always necessary, but only for that Juncture, and the Rest were always necessary: yet this proves that they were all of them necessary for that Juncture, and this they were antecedently to the Imposition, and so they were none of them simply indifferent before the Decree, they were not necessary to be practis'd, because impos'd, as you erroneously assert: but they were first necessary, fit and expedient, and therefore imposed. And if they had been altogether unnecessary & indifferent precedently to the Imposition, the infallible Wisdom and Authority of the holy Ghost, and the Apostles, had never imposed them, but had judged it good not to impose them. And so this Text and this Pre-

Gal. 4.

cedent utterly makes against the imposing of Things indifferent and no way necessary in God's Worship. *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good Thing.* But what is indifferent is neither good nor bad, neither commanded nor forbidden by God, and so we are not to be zealous for it, neither are we to be zealous against it, but it is to be left to each ones Liberty, taking care that they be peaceable, and give no Offence. But against the Doctrine of imposing

Gal. 4. 9.

Things indifferent and unnecessary in God's Worship, we are to be zealous; because it is contrary to the Truth of the Gospel, and gives Superiors and Rulers Power to do ill, to impose an excessive and intolerable Number of needless Things, weak and beggerly Elements, and so to adulterate, corrupt, deform, overthrow and evacuate the very Substance of God's Worship. It is therefore our great Duty to

Gal. 5. 1.

*stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.* This Liberty Christ hath purchased for us, that -- no man may presume to impose any Thing in God's Worship no way necessary. What is necessary & expedient no sober Christian will be against; and what can be said in excuse of those who impose such Things in God's Worship as they themselves confess to be inexpedient & altogether needless?

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CHAP. 17. Mr. B. says, *those who impose such Practices, as Terms of Lay-Communion, are not guilty at all. Because their command may be lawfully obey'd. -- And consequently, those who refuse to perform such Practices, in obedience to their Superiors, are most certainly guilty of Schism.* But certainly this is a great mistake, as will appear by these considerations.

rations. 1. Though the thing imposed be lawfull, and may be lawfully done by inferiors, yet if it be not necessary and expedient, Superiors cannot without Sin enjoin it in God's Worship. *He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God.* The true Fear of God in a just Ruler will not suffer him to impose those Things in God's Worship, which the Ruler himself doth know to be altogether needless, inexpedient, unfit, unprofitable, though they be not flatly Sinfull. *David sinned greatly in the Business of Numbering the People: and yet the People Numbred did not sin by peaceable Submission to that Imposition, they did their Duty; but he confesseth, I have done very foolishly,* he in that Particular was led by Ambition; Indiscretion, Rashness, Incogitancy, Pride, and the like ill Principles that were a Snare to his Soul, and brought great Guilt upon him. Honest and valiant *Uriah* did his Duty in carrying the Letter of his own Execution, and running upon the sword's Point at the Command of his General: and yet King *David* committed enormous Sin in Writing the Letter, and Contriving and Ordering his Death as he did, that so he might marry his Widdow, and thereby conceale and cloke his shamefull Adultery. 2. Though it may be our Duty for Peace sake and the Furtherance of the Gospel, to do this or that indifferent Matter in God's Service, when commanded by our Superiors: yet we sin if we do it in obedience to them, not because we do it, but because we do it upon a wrong Principle. For upon the same Principle we are bound to comply with them in Sin, in laying upon the Church an intolerable multitude of needless things in God's Service, which certainly we are not. 3. It is one thing to do a thing indifferent in God's Service, barely because commanded by our Superiors: it is another thing to do it upon Prudential Grounds, for Peace sake and to promote the Gospel. For though the thing done be the same, yet the inward Motive, Principle and End is not the same; but quite different. By doing a thing indifferent and not necessary in God's Service, barely because commanded by our Superiors, we strengthen them in Sin, we aid and encourage them in ill doing, - - - We ascribe unto them Power and Authority to command what God never authorized them to command, we do in effect idolize and deify mortal Men, and make their arbitrary and needless Impositions of equal Authority and Usefulness with God's own Commandments, we become accessory to all the Oppression, Cruelty, Vexation, Persecution, Violence, unreasonable and unconsconable Severity done to pious and - - - peaceable Dissenters, who judge the thing imposed unlawfull and not indifferent. Though herein they are mistaken and judge amiss, yet being otherwise holy and good Men, and of a peaceable Spirit, and the Thing commanded being indifferent and not necessary, and the Church may well be without it, and if they could be convinced that the Thing is lawfull they would presently Con-

form, such Persons are not to be persecuted, punished, oppressed; silenced, but protected, countenanced and encouraged; the very Law in that Case is Criminal, because it is unmercifull, void of Brotherly Love, repugnant to the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, and that Goodness, Equity and Moderation which is due to Conscientious, godly and peaceable Dissenters. But when we do a Thing indifferent in God's Service, not because it is commanded by our Superiors, but because there is no Sin in doing it, and unless we do it the Shepherd will be smitten and the Sheep scattered, we shall occasion much Sin in our Superiors, and draw upon our selves needless sufferings, and prejudice the Church, and hinder the free Course of the Gospel, now we do our Duty; our Submission to a tolerable inconvenience thus circumstantiated is, I think, a necessary Duty, in the mean between rigid imposing Things indifferent, and such as by Error and Mistake judge them to be sinfull and not indifferent. Hence learned and holy Zanchy wrote one Letter to *Q. Elizabeth* with strong Reasons against imposing the Surplice: and he wrote another Letter to *B. Jewel* with no less strong Reasons for using it, if the Queen would not remit of her Rigor, Protestation being first made against the Doctrine and way of imposing such needless Things in God's Service; the Mention of which Protestation a certain Conforming Divine, writing in defence of the imposing Church of *England*, thought fit to forbear, but it ought to have been honestly let down, and no Part of necessary Truth concealed. The Name of that Divine and his Book for Peace sake I studiously conceal.

P. 137.

CHAP. 18. Mr. B. says, if the Practice be lawfull, as all Practices which our Superiors command in God's Worship are, unless they are forbidden in Scripture: I say, if the Practice be lawfull, we are undoubtedly bound to perform it. Because we have a general and strict Command from God himself to obey our Superiors in all lawfull Things. But undoubtedly you mistake in this Matter, and teach false Doctrine, and lay a great Snare for the Consciences of Rulers and Subjects. For the Scripture doth accurately distinguish between Things lawfull and Things expedient: *All Things are lawfull unto me, but all Things are not expedient; all Things are lawfull for me, but I will not be brought under the Power of any.* And again, *All Things are lawfull for me, but all Things are not expedient; all Things are lawfull for me, but all Things edify not.* Here is plain Distinction between Things lawfull and Things expedient, this Distinction is necessary and inviolable. Certainly very many Things are lawfull, but not necessary, fit, expedient, desirable, profitable, edifying. What Word of God doth oblige us under Pain of Sin and God's Displeasure to obey our Rulers in every needless, inexpedient and unprofitable Thing commanded by them, if it be not unlawfull? Where hath God given Power and Authority to Rulers to impose Things unnecessary

1 Cor. 6.

12.

1 Cor. 10.

23.

and inexpedient in his Service, if they be not unlawfull, and obliged us in conscience to obey them in every such Imposition? Produce but one Scripture, or but one substantial Reason proving this single Point, and carry the Cause. If one needless thing in God's Service be needfull, then by the same Reason two, three, four, and so on *in infinitum*, numberless needless things are needfull in God's Service, which is a Contradiction and simply impossible. Christ plainly says, *But one Thing is needfull*. But if God's Word bind us Luk. 10. to obey our Rulers in every needless Thing enjoined by them in his Service, provided it be not unlawfull, then there can be no difference between things needfull and things needless, and so the *one thing needfull* is subverted, and God's Service is made to consist in things altogether needless. Can Christian ears beare to hear this Doctrine? If humane Laws can alter the immutable Nature of things, & make things *needless* in God's Worship *needfull*, then by the same Reason they can turn *humane* Laws into *Divine*, and make Duty no Duty, and Sin no Sin, and God no God, and all things to be nothing, and nothing to be all things.

**CHAP. 19.** Of all needless things needless Laws are most offensive: and of all needless Laws none so faulty as those which injoin needless things in God's Worship and Service under a severe Penalty. All true Fearers of God, all good Ministers in preaching, all sound Casuists, all good and edifying Writers of practical Books unanimously agree in this Principle, *It is not safe to go to the utmost Bounds of what is lawfull*. Then it cannot be safe and good for Rulers and Superiors to be regardless whether the things imposed by them in God's Service be necessary or unnecessary, expedient or inexpedient, fit or unfit, provided they be lawfull, and not flatly Sinfull. *Licetis perimus omnes*. Is it not abundantly enough for our Duty, if we obey our Rulers in all things *necessary*, and tolerate things *tolerable*, and chuse Suffering rather than Sin? What more can be ascribed to God himself than this, that we are bound in Conscience to obey his Institution of Baptism? If also we be bound in Conscience to obey our Rulers Institution of the Cross in Baptism, supposing it not unlawfull, then what difference can there be between God's Law and Mans Law, between Baptism ordained by God and the Cross ordained by Men? Do we not hereby make Men Coequal with God, and their arbitrary and needless Impositions coequal in Authority and Necessity with Divine Prescriptions? Certainly no humane Law by it self can bind the Conscience: for Conscience being altogether within us, the deepest thing in Man, & out of the reach of other Men, it cannot *ex natura rei* be bound save by somewhat Superior to every Man on earth, and that only is the Law of God. But no law of God doth oblige us under Pain of Sin to obey our Rulers in all needless, arbitrary, inexpedient, unprofitable things enjoined in God's Service, if they be lawfull. The Divine

Law doth indeed oblige us to be good Subjects, to be prudent and peaceable, and of two Evils to chuse the less, and not to - - omit a necessary Duty for the sake of some tolerable inconvenience. But to say that we are bound in Conscience under Pain of Sin and God's Displeasure to obey our Superiors in all inexpedient and needless Impositions, if they be not unlawfull, is utterly atheological, and intolerably absurd & Soul-ensnaring. *Job* an eminent & chief Ruler did not despise the Cause of his Man-Servant, or of his Maid-Servant, when they contended with him, but would hear them patiently, and do them right, when he found they had Truth and Equity on their side. When the Decree was read to the Gentile-believers, they rejoiced for the Consolation, because only things necessary, expedient, fit & profitable were imposed on them. But when things unnecessary & inexpedient are imposed, though they be not flatly Sinfull, that cannot but be Matter of sorrow & heaviness to right-aiming Ministers and Christians; because our Rulers have swerved from the Rule of Duty, and if the Law be established with a severe Penalty, and accordingly executed, the Consequence cannot but be very sad to the Church and Mens Souls. As in the Controversy between Papists and Protestants the Pope is no Judge, but a Party judged by God: so in the Controversy between the Dissenters and Conformists, the Bishops *in foro interno* are no Judge, but a Party judged by God. What is necessary, expedient, decent, profitable, edifying in God's publick Worship, and what is not, belongeth to God alone to judge and decide infallibly, so as to bind every Man's Conscience to acquiesce therein, his Law is the Rule of Judicature, he only *in foro interno* is supreme Judge according to his Word, and an universal, and perfect Decision of these Points in Controversie to the Conviction of every Man's Conscience, is not to be expected till the Day of Judgment. But in the mean time this is plain, if the Dissenters agree with you in all Fundamentals, (as you cannot but own they do) and would for Peace sake Conform to the things in Question, if they could be convinced that they are all lawfull, and no way ensnaring, (as you are bound in Christian Charity to believe them cordially willing) and you will not unite with them upon these Terms, then there must needs be a Schism, a Sinfull and Scandalous breach, and at your Door it will lie. They would fain unite with you upon your Terms, but upon their own Principles they cannot without Sin against God; you upon your own Principles might unite with them by necessary Condescension, without any Sin against God, and will not, and so you are the Peace-breakers, you are the Authors and Upholders of bad and sad Schism, God and Conscience will charge it upon you, by rigorous adhering to things not necessary.

p. 27.

CHAP. 20. Mr. B. his first Charge against the Dissenters is, that they are no valid Ministers for want of Episcopal Ordination, that they

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they are Usurpers of the Ministerial Office, that Episcopal Ordination is necessary, that Ordination in England without the Bishop is null and void; therefore the Dissenters are in his Judgment Schismatics. These things he prosecutes in several Chapters. But as the Charge is very deep, so the Proof is very weak. For the better clearing of this weighty Matter, let us for Argument sake suppose the English Bishops to be Apostles, coequal with Apostles themselves as to Ministerial Office and Authority; yet even so, all things considered, Mr. Bennet's Cause cannot stand. For we may not idolize Apostles, we may not follow them in every thing that they said and did; for in some things they sinned and did amiss, and we may not follow them therein, but onely wherein they follow'd Christ. *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* Wherein they left Christ we are to leave them. One Apostle was Judas the Traitor, the Son of Perdition, a most vile and wretched Man. Another Apostle and the first of all the twelve, once gave Christ very bad Counsel, for which he sharply rebuked him, saying, *Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an Offence unto me.* Afterward through Fear he did with his Tongue three several times deny Christ, and the third time he forswore him. Afterwards he did Judaize and prevaricate at Antioch, and walked not uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel, for which Paul was constrained to reprove him openly, or before all the Saints, because he was to be blamed. Several other things are left upon Record, wherein the Apostles did amiss, that so we might not esteem them more than Men, and make them equal with God. If an Angel from Heaven, or an Apostle, should teach a false Gospel, not I, but God's Word by the Mouth of an Apostle denounceth him accursed. This being so, then if Apostles themselves were now living, and should lay the Peace and Unity of the Church upon things not necessary, and should refuse to Ordain worthy and fit Men for the Ministry, without Subscription and Conformity to something sinfull and ensnaring in the Judgment of the Persons to be Ordained, and indifferent and not necessary in the Judgment of the Ordainers, herein the Apostles shall greatly erre, and necessitate those worthy and fit Men to leave them, and refuse Ordination from them, and procure Ordination from such Pastors and Teachers as will Ordain without such Impositions.

Chap. 8.  
9. 10. 11.

1 Cor. 11.  
1.

p. 38.

CHAP. 21. Mr. B. alledgeth, 'Tis said indeed, that a Man cannot be Ordained by our Bishops, without Subscribing, &c. And where, I pray, is the Sin of Subscribing? But, say they, some godly Men cannot comply with those Subscriptions, which our Laws and Bishops require. And what then? Is there an absolute Necessity, that those godly Men, as they are called, must be Ordained? Cannot the Church subsist, unless they in particular do become Clergy-Men? If they cannot subscribe, and be Ordained, they may continue Lay-men without any Subscription. In your Judgment Subscribing is no Sin, but it is Sin in the Judgment of Dissenters, and both sides agree that

that Sin is not to be approved and done upon any Score. Now look what Necessity there is for you upon your Principles to be a Clergy-Man, there is the like Necessity for the Dissenter upon his Principles to be a Clergy-Man. The Church of God is neither yours, nor his, but God's own Church, which he hath purchased with his own Blood, and both you and the Dissenter are -- equally bound to love and serve God, and be usefull to his Church and to precious Souls by the good Improvement of such Talents, Abilities & Gifts as he hath committed to your Trust. And seeing you confess that the Dissenter agrees with you in all Essentials, then by your own Confession he must needs agree with you in all the Essentials of Ordination and Ministerial Office and Authority; and so you cannot be against the Substance of his Ministry, but you must needs be against your own; and look what it is that solidly proves you a true Gospel-Minister, that very thing doth no less prove the Dissenter to be so too, because you both agree in the Foundation.

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*CHAP. 22.* You add, *And surely 'tis unreasonable, that the established Law should be broken, whensoever this or that godly Man desires it. If his Conscience be against Subscription, let him sit down contented without Ordination. For 'tis utterly unfit, that the settled Rules of Government should be broken for the Humour of every one, that is called a godly Person.* If the Laws be plainly good and necessary, every godly Man will be glad of them, and best observe them: if they be plainly bad and sinfull, it is highly reasonable and necessary that they be broken; if they be neither good nor bad, but plainly indifferent as to the things enjoined, then it may be our Duty for Peace sake to tolerate those things, till the Laws be abrogated, or the Penalties annexed be relaxed or dispensed with. Now the things in question are confessed by the Authors of *The Preface* contained in the Common-Prayer-Book, to be in their own Nature indifferent, but in the Judgment of Dissenters some of them are sinfull and ensnaring, and so they are constrained to refuse Episcopal Ordination. In stead of saying, *If his Conscience be against Subscription, let him sit down contented without Ordination:* you should rather say, if his Conscience be against Subscription to the things in question, being in their own Nature indifferent, *weak and beggerly Elements*, let him go to those that will Ordain without them, and unite with us in all things necessary, and take his Liberty, we will not at all question the validity of his Ordination, we will not differ with him about things meerly indifferent. It is utterly unfit that the holy Laws of God enjoining Mercy rather than Sacrifice, and the necessary and most weighty Duties of Equity, Charity, Christian Unity and Piety rather than beggerly Elements and Things indifferent, should be broken for the Humor of every one that is called a Bishop, or a Reverend Father in God. Do but make it plain from God's Word what is necessary to constitute a Call to the Ministry, and that will serve as truly

Gal. 4. 9.

truly for the Pious Dissenter as for the Pious Conformist, because they are Brethren in Christ, and agree in the Foundation, and are both accepted of God, who doth graciously overlook and pardon undiscerned lesser Errors, the Heart being Sincere. The Dissenters desire not any - - thing unreasonable, or unfit, they would not have the settled Rules of Government broken for the Humor of any one that is called a godly Person and is but nominally so. They only desire that such as are truly godly, and agree in all Essentials, and are good Christians and good Subjects, may as to such things as be extrafundamental, indifferent and not necessary to the Being and Unity of God's Church, and because of Conscientious and peaceable Dissent therein, not be shut out of the Church, counted and used as Schismatics, and denied those Fundamental - - Rights and Priviledges, Advantages and Encouragements in well-doing, which the Divine Law doth oblige Rulers to extend to Jesus Christ in all that be truly his impartially. *When ye Sin so against the Brethren, and wound their weak Conscience, ye Sin against Christ. Wherefore if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth, lest I make my Brother to offend.* 1 Cor. 8.

By the same reason, if imposing things indifferent and not necessary in God's Service, make any of my Christian Brethren to offend, I will not impose one thing indifferent upon any of them while the World standeth; if they will unite with me in all things necessary, I ask no more, I seek no further, as to other Matters neither commanded, nor forbidden by God, I leave them to their free Liberty. This is to be the pious Resolution of all the Conforming Clergy and Layety, and so the Schism and Breach between the two main Parties of Protestants in England and Ireland will be healed, to the joy of all good Men.

CHAP. 23. Mr. B. says, *The Church may be abundantly supplied with pious and learned Clergy-Men, that do and will readily Subscribe, &c. tho' such Persons as Scruple Subscription, &c. be never Ordained. And why then must God's established Rule of Ordination by Bishops be broken, to please the Fancy of some who Scruple Subscription, tho' without Subscription they cannot receive Episcopal Ordination?* But if your supposed pious and learned Clergy-Men have no more Piety and Learning, than your Book is solid and convincing, the Church will be far from being abundantly supplied. Blessed be God for pious and learned Clergy-Men Conformists, and for pious & learned Clergy-Men Dissenters, the Church hath need of both, and they do mutually need each others Prayers, Counsel, Comfort, Assistance and Fellowship in the Gospel. The Church is not the Church, unless it be the Church of God. The Church of God is the mystical Body of Christ, the blessed Company of all faithfull People, any other Church is *Ecclesia malignantium*, the Synagogue of Satan. The true Church of God doth with equal Tendernefs embrace all pious Conforming Ministers, and all pious Dissenting Ministers, as agreeing in the Foundation.

dation. Ordination by Apostles themselves was not valid, barely because performed by Men called Apostles, but because it was by them performed according to the Truth of the Gospel: and such is the Ordination of Dissenters, it is - - performed by them according to the Truth of the Gospel, no one thing Essential and simply Necessary being lacking, you your self being Judge; for you assert and confess that they agree with you in all Essentials, and therefore they must needs by your own honest Concession agree with you in all the Essentials of Ordination. It is not Sin, but the holy Fear of Sin that keeps them from complying with the Terms of Episcopal Ordination. Suppose for Disputation-sake, that they be in a mistake by judging Non-Conformity a Duty, and Clergy-Conformity a Sin: yet cannot this nullifie their Ordination, because it is plainly a tolerable Errour, an Errour that is not easily discernable, that cannot be infallibly demonstrated from God's Word to be an Errour. And if no Ordination be valid in God's Church, but what is performed without all kind of Errour, then Episcopal Ordination is invalid, Ordination performed by the Apostles themselves was invalid; for they were not wholly free from all Kind of Errour. *Who can understand his Errours?* The Apostles themselves say, *Pf. 19. 12. we know in part, and we prophesie in part.* It is the Bishops who go from God's established Rule of Ordination, by rigorous and unreasonable insisting upon something not necessary by God's Law, & in the Judgment of Dissenters Sinfull and ensnaring. Here the Question is not whether the things scrupled by Dissenters be lawfull, or not? but whether they be necessary and expedient in the Judgment of the Holy Ghost, who cannot possibly be deceived? If indeed they be all lawfull, then the Dissenter must needs be in an Errour by thinking some of them unlawfull. *Stante distamine* he cannot Conform and come over to your Terms. But you by owning the things to be lawfull, but not necessary, may easily gain all the Dissenters, and win them to you, and be one with them, and they with you, *Luc. 9. 23. if you will but deny your selves, and take up your Cross daily, and follow Christ the Prince of Peace: if you will but lay aside unnecessary Rigour, and impose only the gentle Yoke of Christ, and forbear needless, inexpedient, unprofitable Impositions of your own devising, that do no good, the Yielding and Condescension for Peace sake must be on your side.*

*CHAP. 24.* Your Surmise that herein the Dissenters are led by groundless Fancy, is very unreasonable and uncharitable: but you have an ill Cause, which cannot stand without something ill to uphold it. I will name one Dissenter, and but one, though many more might be named; but by that one it may appear what kind of Men have been silenced in *England*, and kept out of the Rank of Clergy-Men, Ministers and Pastors. The Person I intend is

Mr.

Mr. Thomas Genge, he lived and died a Nonconformist Minister, a Man of God, a kind of Apostolical man by reason of his yearly visiting Wales, and travelling through that Country, purely upon a Christian account, at his own Charge, to do good to precious Souls, but not permitted to exercise the ministerial Office. His Funeral Sermon was preacht by Dr. Tillotson, afterwards A. B. of Canterbury, wherein a true Character is given of him as excelling in Holiness, Goodness, Humility, Heavenly-mindedness, Peaceableness, Zeal for God, Love to Souls, Inoffensiveness, universal Rectitude constant Serenity of Mind, a most exemplary Life and blessed Death, he had a good Report of all Men and of the truth it self. He was an eminent Minister of Christ, but not suffered to be a Minister in England, *Pudet hac opprobria nobis, hoc dici potuisse & non potuisse refelli. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! O England, England, thou that countest God's Eminent Ministers no Ministers, that dost Silence, Reproach, Persecute and misuse the Lord Jesus Christ in his faithful Ministers! O Act of Uniformity, that layest the Peace and Unity of God's Church upon unscriptural Terms, and thinkest thou dost God good Service in silencing and persecuting Multitudes of Useful, Holy, Able, Exemplary and Worthy Gospel-ministers, either for no fault at all, or for a very small one, contrary to that Lowliness and Meekness, that long-suffering and forbearance in Love, which God obligeth thee for his sake to exercise,* Eph. 4. 2. and still blesteth thy self in thine impenitency? How dost thou think to make thy appearance before the Lord Jesus Christ with Boldness and Comfort at the great Day? Read and consider these Words, and repent in time, *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. Mat. 10. 32. But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.* Now thou Act of Uniformity, dost deny Christ in Multitudes of his Ministers, and curstest those whom he doth bless, and rejectest those whom he doth receive, and art ashamed of those whom he doth Honour: Thy very Advocates and Patrons cannot but own that the Dissenting Ministers agree in all Essentials and Fundamentals, and yet thou hardenest thy self in thine Errours and Ill-doings, and wilt not repent, and know the way of Peace.

CHAP. 25. Mr. B. hath a long Passage out of Dr. Maurice, which concludes thus. *If we therefore do judge such Ordinations here to P. 40. be Nullities, because administered by Subordinate Officers, against the Laws of the Church, in opposition to their Superiors, and against the practice and discipline of the primitive Christians, we cannot be thought singular in this judgment. Since all Ancient Churches would have done the same thing, and all the Protestant Churches in Europe, in the like Case, would follow our Example. For answer hereto let these following consi-*

derations be calmly and impartially minded. 1. The Ordinations performed here by Protestant Dissenters, are plainly Conformable to, and not against the laws of the Church. For the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the blessed Company of all faithfull People, as the *Liturgy* doth well express it. Besides this one Universal Church, there is no other but the Synagogue of Satan, the whole Society of faithless and ungodly Sinners. The laws of the Church are those set down in the Bible; The Sum whereof is doing justly, and loving Mercy, and walking humbly with our God. The Dissenters Ordinations are not repugnant to, but well Consistent herewith. 2. It is not true that the Dissenters Ordinations are performed by *Subordinate Officers*, in opposition to their *Superiors*. For they are performed by Gospel-ministers, Owing and Paying Spiritual Subjection to Christ and his Gospel, and Civil Subjection to the Queen as Supreme Ruler by the Sword, and to her lawfull Deputies. But the Bishops have no governing Supremacy, they are not Christ, they are not the Queen, they are but Disciples of Christ, and the Queen's Subjects. We are not the Bishops Ministers, but Christ's Ministers: We are not the Bishops Subjects, but the Queen's Subjects. Authority to Preach, to dispense the Sacraments, to ordain Ministers, to rule and discipline the Church by God's Word, is not partly from Christ and partly from the Queen or the Bishops, but entirely from Christ, *qui unus & solus habet potestatem, et praeponendi nos in Ecclesia sua Gubernatione, & de actu nostro judicandi*, as blessed Cyprian rightly asserteth. God's Word in the Mouth of the meanest Gospel-minister, is Superior to Apostles and Bishops, to the highest on Earth and to the Angels of Heaven. 3. If the Bishops claim a Governing Supremacy in God's Church, by that very Claim they make themselves Papal Usurpers contrary to the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and to the 27th Article of Religion. Apostles themselves had no governing Supremacy, but only Subordinate authority as the *Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. If the Bishops claim no governing Supremacy, then Presbyters cannot be their *Subordinate Officers*: For Supreme and Subordinate are related, and do mutually prove and infer each other; no Supreme Authority, no Subordinate Authority. 4 The Practice and Discipline of the primitive Christians is that set down in the Bible: But nothing in all the Bible doth prove the Dissenters Ordination to be null and invalid. The Bishops cannot have greater Authority than Apostles. But Apostles themselves had no Authority to command and impose unnecessary and inexpedient things, though lawfull, but only such things as were not only lawfull, but also necessary and expedient. But it can never be proved that all the things in question are necessary and expedient, and if but one thing be unnecessary and inexpedient, though lawfull, then the Act of Uniformity

De heret.  
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1 Cor. 4. 1

mity cannot but be an ill Act, because it imposeth what is needless and inexpedient upon all Christ's Ministers in the Nation under a severe Penalty. If indeed all the things in question be lawfull, then I think for peace sake the Dissenters ought to Conform, and Comply with the Bishops way of Ordination, and forbear Presbyterian Ordination, supposing them clearly satisfied that they are Lawfull. For though they be needless and inexpedient, yet if they be not unlawfull, they are tolerable inconveniences, and for Peace and Unity sake we are to Submit to them, and not separate from one another in God's service for such things.

CHAP. 26. The Dissenters cannot be convinced that all the things in question are lawfull. You say they are all lawfull and are satisfied in Conscience that they are so, but it is plain they are not all necessary and expedient, and so it is your duty to forbear the imposing of such things as are not necessary and expedient, and you Sin against God by continuing and keeping up the imposition. But there being none on Earth that can authoritatively and infallibly decide this single Controversy between the two Parties, *Whether all the Points of Clergy-conformity candidly understood, be lawfull or not?* It doth not infallibly appear that the Dissenters do err and judge amiss, by judging some of the things in question Sinfull, and by refusing Episcopal Ordination. But rather you by Confessing that they agree with you in all Essentials and Fundamentals, do invincibly establish the Dissenters Ordination, and the Dissenters need none other to justify their Cause but your selves. For this is not only *argumentum ad hominem*, but also *argumentum ad rem*. — Do but soundly prove and make good your own Ordination, and the Validity thereof against the Atheist, the Infidel, and the common Enemy of Christianity, and you do *eo ipso* establish the Dissenters Ordination, and the Validity thereof, as being one and the same with your own as to all Essentials, and things simply necessary. I grant that if all the things in question be lawfull, then for Peace sake Episcopal Ordination is necessary, and Presbyterian Ordination is what ought not to be. But if — any of the things in question be unlawful and flatly sinful, then you cannot but grant that Presbyterian Ordination is necessary, and Episcopal Ordination ought not to be. Here therefore the Dissenter is upon even ground with you, and either you must justify the Dissenters Ordination, or Condemn your own, and plainly say that there is no such thing as Ordination, and that the Gospel it self is but a Fable. Suppose the utmost, that the Dissenter at the Day of Judgment be found to be in an Errour, and God shall then decide and determine that all the Points of Clergy-Conformity are lawfull, and that it was his duty to be Episcopally Ordained, and to refuse Presbyterian Ordination. What then? Will therefore God

for this single unperceived Errour cast all the Dissenters into Hell, and shut them out of Heaven for ever? Will he say, Devil, because these Dissenters were deceived in one small Point, and were not so Knowing, so Holy, so Good, as they ought to have been, though they were in some measure Knowing, Holy, Good, therefore away with them, and lay them Body and Soul, in Hell, as hatefull and execrable Schismaticks, and let them be damned for ever? As a Deformed, Sickly, Wounded, Blind, Lame Man is yet a true Living-man, and it would be a capital Crime wilfully to kill him: So Presbyterian as well as Episcopal Ordination may be for substance Good and Valid, and yet attended with many tolerable Defects, Spots, Blemishes, Errours, Infirmities.

**CHAP. 27.** The pastoral Office is neither from the People, nor from the Clergy, nor from the Magistrate, nor from all these Conjunct, but only from God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives ministerial Qualification, the Gospel is his, the Sacraments are his, the Church is his, all Souls are his, all good Duty is appointed by him, and he worketh all in all good Effects. What Apostles, Evangelists, Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors may do by way of Probation, imposing Hands, Fasting and Prayer, Instruction, Admonition, Exhortation, Charge, Authorizing, after a solemn Way and Manner, must be supposed for substance to be according to the truth of the Gospel, or it is altogether Null and invalid, as lacking a good Foundation. *For other foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid which is Jesus Christ.* If the Dissenters Ordination do not for Substance stand upon this divine Foundation, it cannot be told what is valid Ordination, a wide Door is opened for numberless Rebaptizations, Reordinations, and Reiterations of one and the same Gospel-ordinance, and the Consciences of Christian People are cast upon endless perplexities touching the true Church, and true Sacraments, and true Ministry, and the Way to Heaven, and you bring in the exploded Heretical Schism and Schismatical Heresie of the Donatists.

**CHAP. 28.** For the Sum of the Controversy between the Donatists and the Orthodox is plainly this: The Donatists maintained that Baptism is partly from God, and partly from the Minister, but principally from God: And that it is not the Baptism of Christ unless it be holy, and holy it cannot be if the Minister be visibly unholy; For the Effect cannot be better than the Cause, nor the Streams more pure than the Fountain from whence they Proceed. The Orthodox did soundly and invincibly assert and prove, that Baptism is not partly from God, and partly from the Minister, but only from God as all in all, though not without the Minister, but he adds no Perfection to God. And therefore though the Minister be Visibly Unholy, like Hophni and Phineas, those two notoriously  
lewd

Lewd and infamous Priests; yet the want of visible Holiness in the Minister, doth not nullifie his Office and Calling, it doth not make him no Minister, his Office and Calling is of God, the good Doctrine taught by him, and the Sacraments for Substance dispensed by him according to the Gospel, are Holy and Pure, and are not at all corrupted, defiled, nullified, invalidated by the Personal Scandals and Enormities of the Minister, though they are Matter of Grief to all good Men, and it would be much more comfortable to the Saints to have Ministers blameless and holy, and where such can be had they are to be had. Those Conforming Brethren who deny Ordination by Dissenters to be valid, proceed upon the *Donatistical* Principle, and cannot but so do while they are intangled in that Snare. For this in short is the Sum of their Arguing, that Ordination is partly from God, and partly from the Bishop as the Head-Clergy-Man, but principally from God. This I deny, and contend that it is heretical Doctrine, though I do not think those to be Hereticks who ignorantly assert it, if it be but the Error of their Heads and Brains, and not of their Hearts and Lives, if it be not their Idol, and they be otherwise godly Men. But the Principle it self is Heretical and Anti-Fundamental; for God is not God, unless he be infinitely perfect; and therefore no Effect can be partly from God; and partly from the Creature, but God is truly all in all good Effects, and the Creature addeth no Perfection to him. As two dead Corpses joined together, cannot make one living Man: so if God and the Bishop concur in Ordination as two partial Causes, they cannot make one infinitely perfect Cause: and no infinitely perfect Cause, no God. *I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another.* To ascribe Ordination partly to God, and partly to the Bishop, is to make the Bishop coequal and coordinate with God, and to make God himself Imperfect and no God, it is to give his Glory to another. The holy Apostles did not esteem themselves *any thing*, but ascribed all to God only. Look from whom the Apostles had their ministerial Authority, from the very same Fountain all Gospel-Ministers have their Office and Function to the End of the World. But the Apostles had not their Authority partly from God, and partly from themselves, but from him onely and entirely by his Word believed and observed. And where now is God's Word believed and observed in Ordination, there is certainly valid Ordination.

**CHAP. 29.** It indeed a Party of the Conforming Clergy, having no Conscientious Scruples against Subscription and Conformity, should in imitation of Corah and his Confederates, of meer Ambition and wicked Lust presume to Ordain without the Bishop, and contrary to the Will of the Bishop, this Ordination might well be pronounced null and invalid, not barely because it is Presbyterian, and

and performed by meer Presbyters; but because it is performed by them contrary to the Truth of the Gospel, and lacketh a good Foundation, being founded in manifest Pride, Impiety, Uncharitableness, Envy, Unpeaceableness, Disorder, Usurpation, contrary to the Principles of those who Ordain, and so they are self-condemned. But it is otherwise as to Dissenters Ordination, here is plainly a good Foundation. *Thus saith the Lord, Destroy is not, for a blessing is in it.* The Dissenters Ordination is grounded in Truth, in the Fear of God; in Christian-Meekness, in holy Concord, in regular Consistency with all valid Ordinations upon Earth; if some lesser Errours, Weaknesses, Defects, Infirmities cleave to it, and go along with it, they are all tolerable among Brethren, they are but such as all God's Saints and faithfull Ministers are more or less Incident to while in the Body. Apostles themselves did not make God's Word, but his Word Believed and Observed made them Apostles: and the very same Word Believed and Observed makes all other Gospel-Ministers to the End of the World.

*CHAP. 30.* This Principle, that - - - Ordination is partly from God as Supreme, and partly from the Bishop as Subordinate and the Head-Clergy-Man, is the same with the graceless Doctrine of *Pelagians, Semipelagians and Arminians*. For Mr. John Goodwin in the Preface to his Book for Universal Redemption, doth most aptly and plainly so open their Doctrine, and the very Opening of it is enough to confute it, he there speaks to this purpose; Suppose the Work of saving Faith to consist of a thousand Parts, nine hundred ninety and nine are to be ascribed to Divine Grace, and but one small Part to Man's Free-will. But certainly either God is *all in all*, or he is nothing at all, he is totally excluded, and Man's Free-will is *all in all*, and God is denied. For God is not God, unless he be infinitely and immutably perfect; and he is not infinitely and immutably perfect, if this or that good Effect be partly from God, and partly from us. Sin in us is not partly from us, and partly from God, but entirely and solely from us as seduced by the Devil, and not at all from God. Saving Faith is not partly from God, and partly from us, but entirely and solely from God as *all in all*, in the use of his own Means, that so our glorying might be in him, and not in our selves.

*Psal. 62. My Soul, wait thou only upon God: for my Expectation is from him. He only is my Rock and my Salvation.* This is the Voice of Faith in every godly Conformist and Non-Conformist, in every upright Servant of God. Not partly God, and partly the Creature, the Bishop, the Presbyter, this or that Man, or Number of Men; But, *God only is my Rock and my Salvation* in the Way of holy Obedience. *I will go in the Strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy Righteousness, even of thine only.* Not partly God's Righteousness, and partly our own: but we are from first to last absolutely and entirely to rely only

only on God's Righteousness in Christ for Remission of Sins and eternal Life in the Way of Gospel-Repentance and Christian Self-denial and godly Sincerity. *I will have Mercy on whom I will have Rem. 9. Mercy, and I will have Compassion on whom I will have Compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy.* It is God's eternal Mercy in Christ that gives Repentance to the Elect: the very same Mercy pardons them being Penitent: the very same Mercy gives them Perseverance: and the very same Mercy crowns their Perseverance with eternal Glory in Heaven as a Reward of Grace, not of Debt. Thus saving Faith is not partly from God's Mercy, and partly from our good Endeavour, but entirely from Divine Mercy as the sole Cause of all our good Endeavour, and the contrary Doctrine is Pelagianism, graceless, unholy, anti-evangelical, a main Pillar of the Devil's Kingdom. If good Effects be partly from God, and partly from us, then we must all pray to this purpose: *Lord, do not convert us, but almost convert us: do not save us from our Sins, but almost save us: thou hast thy Part to do without us, and we have our Part to do without thee: look thou to thine own Part, and take no care for us, we shall look to our own Part without thee and thy Mercy, we need not thy Mercy for what belongs to us.* This Kind of Praying is rather blaspheming God than right calling upon him.

**CHAP. 31.** Moreover, according to this graceless Doctrine all God's saved ones are to say to this Effect: We thank God indeed for making us Men, and for bare universal Grace in common with *Cain, Pharaoh, Judas*, and the rest of damned Reprobates now in Hell, when they were on Earth. But for our Conversion and Perseverance and Consequent eternal Salvation we owe God no thanks at all, but he is Debter and beholden to us for our good Merits, and not we at all to him for special and differencing Grace, for saving Grace, for eternal Salvation. If this be not anti-Christian and anti-Evangelical Doctrine, what is? In all Conforming Congregations this sound Form of Prayer is constantly used, *Give Peace in our Time, O Lord: because there is none other that fighteth for us, but onely thou, O God.* In my hearing this good and holy Form hath been taxed, blamed, argued against by some I think godly Christians, but herein greatly mistaken and blame-worthy. For though under God there are Armies and valiant Men both by Land and Sea, who fight for us, and are Instrumental and subordinate Causes of our Safety and Quiet: yet they add no Perfection to God, still it is most certain and necessary Truth, that there is none other that fighteth for us, but onely God: our Peace, Protection, Preservation & comfortable Dwelling is not partly from God, and partly from Men, but only and entirely from God alone, as all in all, by Men as his Agents and Instruments. *For of him, and through him, and to him are all Things. Rom. 11. Joshua and his Followers were not idle, cowardly, negligent in*

Warr against the Canaanites, but vigilant, valiant, industrious, every one did his Part, and though *Joshua* the Famous and renowned General was eminently and chiefly Instrumental, yet he was not solely Instrumental, inferior Captains and Officers and common Soldiers were co-assistant and concurrent Causes, each one in his Place contributing his proper Part, and subduing the Enemy, and getting the Land in possession by their own Sword. And yet it is most true, necessary and pious Doctrine what the Psalmist says, *Psalm. 44. they got not the Land in possession by their own Sword, neither did their own Arm save them: but thy right Hand, and thine Arm, and the Light of thy Countenance, because thou hadst a Favour unto them.* Not partly God's Arm, and partly their own Arm, but God's Arm was all in all, it alone saved them, and subdued the Enemy, but not without regular Means and subordinate Causes. Upon a Day of Ordination whether in the Episcopal or Non-Episcopal Way, under God there is a plurality of Causes concurring, some as Clergy-Men, some as Lay-Christians, there is a Sermon, there is Prayer and Praise to God, there is imposing Hands, there is religious Solemnity, Decency, Gravity, there is great Variety of Instrumental and adjuvant Causes, and yet Christian Concord, some may be more Instrumental, some less, but every devout Member of the Congregation is useful, and doeth his Part. And yet it is most true and necessary Doctrine, that the Minister thus Ordained hath not his Pastoral Authority partly from God, and partly from this or that Man, or Number of Men, but entirely and only from God alone as *all in all*, by the Belief and Observance of his Gospel, yet not without some tolerable Defects and Imperfections.

CHAP. 32. We are no true - - - Ministers of Christ, if we be Ministers of Man's making, and not made by God. As none but God can make us Men, so none but God can make us valid Gospel-Ministers. Rightly understood it is Qualification, and Qualification only that makes a Gospel-Minister, not without external regular Ordination where it may be had: but still all that is necessary to the being of a Gospel-Minister is comprized within Qualification and what Qualification doth connote and include. If we could suppose the utterly and notoriously incapable, Ordained Minister by the Apostles themselves, the Ordination could not but be utterly null and invalid. Certainly Ministerial Capacity and Qualification, is not partly from God, and partly from Man, but entirely from God as the sole Cause of every good Effect, of every good and perfect Gift. Holy and good Doctrine is the very Touch-Stone or Standard whereby to try and prove a Minister, whether he be a Minister of Christ or no. Letters of Ordination may be forged and counterfeit, but so cannot holy and sound Doctrine. The Devil himself can deceive by lying and false Miracles and Words, but he

he cannot be the Author of holy and good Doctrine. An Infant, a mad Man, a dumb Man may be holy: But no Infant, no mad Man, no dumb Man can teach holy and good Doctrine. The Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles were but Subservient to the holy and good Doctrine taught by them. For, the work of the Ministry is to winn Souls to God: And this is done by holy & good Doctrine, Taught, Heard, Believed and Reduced to Practice. There was never any false Minister to this day but his Doctrine was unsound, it did not lead Souls to God, but from him, and was a share to their Consciences. The doctrine taught by the Dissenters is apparently good and holy, and therefore they must needs be true Gospel-Ministers. Every godly Person is not a Minister, and no doubt but one that is ungodly inwardly, a very Judas, the Son of Perdition, may be a valid Minister; And therefore the Office and Calling of a Minister must needs consist in something that is Common to Peter and Judas, to good and bad Men, who are Ministers. And what can that be but good and holy Doctrine taught, & calling upon God through Jesus Christ, and Sacraments for Substance rightly dispensed according to the Gospel? For these are things that all the Congregation, and the Generality of Christian People everywhere, and such as fear God, can judge of and discern. And certainly either these things are in the Dissenting Congregations, or they are not in the Conforming Congregations, they are no where to be found upon Earth. This is God's Promise, *a little Child shall lead them.* Isa. 11. 6. Though the Dissenting Minister be a little Child, seemingly Base and Contemptible, thrust into a Barn by the Iniquity of the Times, maligned, reproached, despised, counted no Minister of Christ, but an Usurper: yet if God's Word be in his Mouth, if he teach the everlasting Gospel, and the converting, edifying, & comforting Presence of Christ go along with his Ministry, such as fear God will be led & guided by his holy Word, in the Mouth of this little Child, & will not so much regard the Person who teacheth, as the holy Doctrine taught by him; Nor by what Man Sinners be Converted, as that indeed they be Converted, & a happy Change be wrought in them.

CHAP. 13. A great deal is said by Mr. Bennet, in excuse of the Ordinations in foreign reformed Churches without a Bishop, as quite a different case from Non-episcopal Ordinations in England, this he prosecutes in two Chapters. But imagine what Difference you please between the two Cases, make it as great as in truth you can, still this one Consideration, that the Dissenters agree with you in all Fundamentals, and that some of the things in Question are Sinfull in their Judgment, and not necessary to the Being and Unity of the Church, in the Judgment of Conformists themselves, is abundantly enough to justify the Dissenters against your Imputation of damnable Sin, and to prove their Ordinations good and valid. But if Episcopal Ordina-

Ordination be of so great Necessity, as you contend it is, then all those foreign reformed Churches, that remain without Bishops, and chuse so to be, must needs be inexorably guilty before God, of neglecting this part of their Duty. For what can be said in defence of those who neglect necessary Duty, and persist in so doing? What hinders, but that the Protestant Government in the *Netherlands, Helvetia, and Geneva*, might have Bishops if they would, as well as we in *England*? If God's Law bind them to have Bishops and Episcopal Ordination, and they refuse and will not, then nothing that you or any other can say in excuse of their sinful Refusal and Disobedience, can clear them from Guilt, by excusing their Sin you draw Guilt upon your selves. If God's Law bind them not to have Bishops and Episcopal Ordination, and yet no where forbid them, then it doth not bind us in *England*, precedently to humane Imposition, to have them; and so the utmost that can in truth be said for Episcopal Ordination in *England*, is, that it is lawful, and being enjoined by the Law temporal, and no where forbidden by God, for Peace sake it is the duty of Dissenters to comply with Episcopal Ordination, if they could be convinced that it is their Duty so to do. But while they conscientiously scruple something in Episcopal Ordination, and think it Sinful, and if they could be otherwise convinced would presently Conform: And while the thing in Question is barely lawful, but not necessary; and in all other Points and Matters they agree with you, and are worthy and good Men, accepted of God, and of much good Use in the Church, you cannot without greivous Sin, disown their Ministry and Ordination, and refuse to give them the right-Hands of Fellowship. Moreover the last Act of Uniformity hath introduced a Scandalous and Criminal Novelty: For before, one Ordained in Foreign Parts without a Bishop, and coming into *England*, was Capable of Preferment and Employment, and of having a Benefice upon simple Conformity, without Reordination. But now Reordination by a Bishop is required, which is an inexcusable Rigour beyond the Moderation of former times, since the beginning of our happy Reformation.

CHAP. 34. Certainly those are the best Ministers, who are most  
*1 Tim. 5.* like Jesus Christ and the holy Apostles, and give themselves continually to Prayer, and to the Ministry of the Word. Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double Honour, Especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. If the Presbyter or Parish-minister labour in the Word and Doctrine, he is especially worthy of double Honour from God's People; but so is not the Bishop, though he rule well, if he do not labour in the Word and Doctrine. For though in that case he also be worthy of double Honour, yet he is not especially so. As for worldly Titles, Honours, Revenues, Courts, Jurisdictions, these are civil and cumulative things, they are not from Christ, but

but from the Prince and State, they are accidental to the Pastoral Office. Christ and his Apostles had none such, the Clergy for these hundred Years after Christ had none of them. For his Kingdom is not of this World. His Word in the Mouth of the meanest Minister, lay Christian, Woman, doth carry its own Authority along with it, is Gods word as truly as in the Mouth of an Apostle, all owe Subjection to it, it is Superior to the highest on Earth, and *Balaam* received great Folly and Madness in not hearkening to Gods Word and Whomsoever Reproof, miraculously uttered by his dumb Ass. What though the Dissenters (as you observe) grant Episcopal Ordination to be valid, but you deny their Non-episcopal Ordination to be valid, that doth neither prejudice their Cause, nor better yours. But rather it shews them to excel you in Christian Charity: which is a good sign that the Truth is on their side, and that you erre, and herein tread in the steps of Donatists and Papists, by making an ill use of Innocent and Charitable Concessions, to the hardening of your selves in Sect-principles. The Dissenters do not own Episcopal Ordination to be valid, barely because it is Episcopal, but because it is for substance Evangelical, and so the same with their own.

P. 28.

P. 110.

CHAP. 35. Mr. B. says, God has established one General, Eternal Penalty, viz. eternal Damnation, to secure Obedience to all Laws. He has declared in his Word, that those shall be damned, who disobey the lawful Commands of their Governours. Now this Penalty of Damnation belongs to the Acts for Uniformity, as well as to other Laws. And consequently, Men are now bound to obey the Acts for Uniformity, under the Penalty of Damnation. If this be so, if we are bound under Pain of eternal Damnation to obey all the lawful commands of our Governors, to observe all their needless and inexpedient Impositions, if they be not Sinful and unlawful, what Difference can there be between the Laws of God, and the Laws of Men? between the Bible and the English Statute-book? All sound Protestants do justly detest and renounce the Doctrine of the Council of Trent, which decreeth unwritten Traditions and Apochrypha-books, to be received *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*, with equal Affection of Piety and Reverence with the written Word of God and Canonical Scripture, and curseth such as contain this their audacious and impious Decree. Wherein doth your doctrine come short of the Papal Doctrine? What do you but make us a new Bible, a new Gospel never heard of before? God in Scripture denounceth Eternal Damnation against such as shall presume to add to his Word: And you teach for Doctrine that the Penalty of Eternal Damnation belongs to all Laws of Men, injoining Lawful things? Is not this plainly to add to Gods Word, and make the Laws of Men Coequal and Coordinate with the Laws of God? Mr. Rogers in his Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, tells us that

Concil.  
Trident.  
Sess. 4.

P. 100.

The Church of Rome is justly condemned of us, and all Churches Reformed; because she hath erred, and still very badly every Way she offend in Ceremonies, which are in Number infinite. Gerson writeth, how diverse Men have run into Desperation; others have killed themselves, finding that they were not able to keep and perform the Ceremonies of the Romish Church. And certainly if Mr. B. his Doctrine be true, all of us must needs run into Desperation: for the things enjoined by the English Laws, Canons and Constitutions are in Number infinite, and every Parliament is adding to them; if we must observe every needless and unprofitable Injunction, if not unlawfull, under the severe Penalty of endless Damnation, we cannot escape endless Damnation. This Doctrine doth by necessary Consequence make a new Bible, a new Creed, a new Gospel, a new Way to Heaven, a new God. Surely, Mr. Bennet, if Conformity cannot stand without this Doctrine, you have a very desperate Cause, and you cannot take a more effectual Way to Establish, Propagate and Spread Non-Conformity, than to oppose it by such Arguments as these, and publish such Books against it. If there were no Act of Toleration, it could not be our Duty to observe all, or any the Things commanded by the Acts of Uniformity, under Pain of eternal Damnation: because they are none of them necessary, at most they are but lawfull, there is no Necessity that they be observed, unless for the sake of Peace and Concord among Brethren, and to further the Gospel by Submission to some tolerable Inconvenience. But this is a different Thing from Obedience to a Law injoining needless Things. But now the Act of Toleration hath relaxed all Temporal Penalties as to Dissenters, and being the Things imposed are needless, and not enjoined by God's Law, there can be no Peril to the Soul by not obeying Man's Law herein. Even God's own Laws do not oblige us to sinless Perfection under Pain of eternal Damnation. For though sinless Perfection, be our Duty, yet not under Pain of eternal Damnation. It is abundantly enough to our Acceptance with God and eternal Salvation, if we be in some Measure godly in Christ Jesus, though in this Life we attain not to sinless Perfection: for otherwise none of fallen Mankind can be saved.

P. 118.

CHAP. 36. Mr. B. says, the Pretence of Toleration is utterly impertinent, and nothing at all to the purpose; because it do's not, and it cannot in the least alter your Case, or make it in any wise either better or worse. For, if you were not Schismatics before that Act was made, 'tis ridiculous to excuse your selves by pleading that Act. But if you were Schismatics before that Act was made, then you are Schismatics still, notwithstanding the Act of Toleration. But though the Act of Toleration doth only free the Dissenters from Temporal Penalties, and if they were Schismatics before, they are Schismatics still: yet being they were no Schismatics before, their Case outwardly is much altered by

by that Act; because it gives them the Opportunity and Liberty of exercising their Ministry with better Advantage to Souls, and without Fear of those unreasonable Severities and Penalties which they were lyable to, before they had this legal Exemption and Security. They are not so weak as to think that Man's Law can alter the Nature of things, and make that to be no Criminal Schism, which is really so in its own Nature. But they constantly maintain, that their Way is not the Way of Criminal Schism, but of Innocency and Truth: and yet they are beholden to God, and to the Clemency of the higher Powers under God, for the present Toleration, without which they could not have such stated, large, undisturbed Meetings. It is you, Mr. Bennet, and such as you, that do by your self-confounding Principles alter the immutable Nature of things, and make the Matters in Question, precedently to humane Law and Imposition, to be indifferent and needless, but subsequently to humane Law and Imposition, necessary, most necessary, as Necessary as Holiness, as Faith and Repentance, as Perseverance in well doing. For if we are bound to use the Surplice, Cross in Baptism, Kneeling in the Lord's-Supper, and all the prescribed Forms in the Liturgy, and to subscribe to the use thereof, under Pain of eternal Damnation; are not these things most necessary, as necessary as any one thing imposed by God himself? This is such Execrable and Anti-Christian Doctrine, that all my Zeal and indignation falls short of expressing the Sinfulness and Peril thereof.

CHAP. 37. Mr. B. says, *He who frequents a separate Congregation in Opposition to his own, is a Schismatick. This the Dissenters do.* If the Man be a good Christian, then both Congregations are his for his Spiritual Profit and the Furtherance of his Salvation. *For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* By this inviolable Charter a Christian hath true Right to join with either Congregation, constantly or occasionally, as he in his Circumstances shall soundly judge it best for his Edification, supposing the two Congregations to agree in the Foundation, and the Doctrine, Worship and Sacraments in both be in some Measure holy and good; but then he is to take care that if his outward Practice vary by going sometime to the one, and sometime to the other, his inward Motives, Principles and Ends be invariably honest and upright before God. Thus doing, he is no Schismatick, but a Saint, an orderly Servant of God. And suppose the utmost, that he doth erre some little by varying his Practice as to external Communion, not wilfully and stubbornly, but through invincible Ignorance and Weakness of Judgment, it is a safe Error, from Errors and Weaknesses of this Nature the very best

best of God's Saints, while in the Body, are not totally free, and if one be a Schismatick, all godly Persons every where must needs be Schismaticks and Damned for ever. But if the Man be an ungodly Christian, then whether he go to the Dissenter, or to the Conformist, whether he keep to the one Party, or join with both frequently, or but seldom, he is verily a practical Atheist, Infidel, Heretick, Schismatick, not because he is a Christian outwardly, not because of his external Church-Communion with either Party, but simply because he is ungodly, and lives an ungodly Life, his Ungodliness is a Complication of heinous Soul-ruining Sins, making void all the Articles of the Christian Faith, all the Evangelical Precepts, all the Petitions in the Lord's Prayer, and the Doctrine of both Sacraments. *Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly; the Ungodly shall not stand in the Judgment; the Way of the Ungodly shall perish.*

*Psal. 1.*

*p. 42.  
64.*

**CHAP. 38.** But because Mr. Bennet makes this his Second Charge against the Dissenters, that they withdraw People from the Conforming Clergy, whom he supposeth to be their proper Pastors, and Create to themselves other Pastors, who mislead them, and therefore in his Judgment both Leaders and Followers are Schismaticks, though it should be granted and supposed that the Dissenting Ministers are valid Ministers, and have valid Ordination in their Way without the Bishop. I may not let this Matter pass without some further Animadversion and Inlargement. The Multiplying of Places for God's publick Worship needlessly, without doubt is not good. For if it be good to make one Place for publick Worship needlessly, why not two, three, four, and so on endlessly, till God's publick Worship be quite destroyed by Divisions and Subdivisions, not two Christians agreeing in Gods publick Worship? If therefore one Place for publick Worship be enough, there is to be no more: if two need and will suffice, there are to be two, and no more: if less than ten will not suffice, and those will be full enough, there are to be ten, and no more. Where one Place for publick Worship is full enough, and conveniently near for resort of all the People, it is certainly the Will of God, and the Way of Peace and general Edification in Faith and Love, in Holiness and Comfort, for all the Christians in that City, Town, Village, Parish, Chappelry, Vicinity or Perambulation, lovingly to join together in the Word, and Prayer, and Sacraments publickly, and Unite in an Edifying Ministry. If some be in Judgment Dissenters, and are for a Dissenting Minister, and others be in Judgment Conformists, and for a Conforming Minister, yet they are all bound to deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and follow Christ, and make him their Guide and Leader, and so order Matters as to have but one Assembly and Place of publick Worship, all are to go one Way, and there is to be no separate Meeting, the Dissenting Minister and the Conforming Minister

nister are to love as Brethren, and be mutually dear to each other, and practise holy Emulation, and concordantly oversee and take care of *all this flock*. The Conforming Minister is to use all good Gentleness and Condescension towards the Dissenters, and impose nothing unreasonable upon them: the like Moderation is due from the Dissenting Minister toward the Conformists, and these Party-Names are to be forborn, and all are to be called by one Uniting Name, the Name of Christ, e. g. the Church of God at *Corinth*, the Society of Christian People at *Ephesus*, at *Smyrna*, at this or that Place. Now I beseech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment. But if this cannot be obtained, but they will needs break off from external Communion with one another in publick Worship in one Assembly, and chuse rather to be two stated Congregations at the same time, than lovingly and concordantly Unite in one, then there cannot but be a Rent, a Breach, a Criminal Schism and Division, like that at *Corinth*, every one saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. And look who it is — that by Pride, unreasonable Stiffness, Self-will, Foolishness, Envy, Carnality, Superstition, Rashness, Unpeaceableness, is a Cause of this Rent and Schism, at his Door it will lie, God and Right informed Conscience will charge it upon him. Not they who separate, but they who causelessly separate are guilty of Schism. But yet we must not by unjust Censure make the Breach and Schism wider and greater than it is. Though it be bad and faulty, yet it may not be Destructive of Piety and Church-Unity, but only weaken it and hinder its Flourishing State; it may not be the highest Kind of Schism, but a Schism of a lesser and lower Nature. As every Sickness and Sore and Wound in the Body, is not Mortal and incurable: So every Kind of faulty Schism doth not extinguish Church-Unity. Two Men may fight and quarrel with each other, and wound each other, and yet neither be killed. He that is but almost a Schismatick, is no Schismatick, but a Saint. No godly Christian is a Schismatick and Separatist from the Church of God and the Communion of Saints, as to Fundamental Principles, Graces, Duties, Benefits. All Errors are not Anti-fundamental, and all godly Men are not equally godly, meek, humble, blameless, discreet, peaceable, considerate, impartial, free from causeless Prejudice, sound in Judgment. In doubtfull Cases we are to think the best, and put the best Construction upon the ways and doings of our Brethren that they will beare, and be of a healing Temper: and it may be our Duty to think many a one truly godly, who yet may not be so in the Sight of God. *Chrysostom* and *Epiphanius*, *Jerome* and *Rufinus*, *Luther* and *Zwinglius*, were all holy and good Men, and yet

1 Cor. 12.

28.

Jam. 5.

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yet

yet but Men, they were not without Schisms and Breaches between them. But this I take to be a sure Rule, consented to by all good Ministers and Christians: Where one Place will well hold all the People, and is conveniently near for resort, and the Minister is faithfull, and able to teach others also, and Christ is graciously present and concurrerth with his Ministry, and all that can be objected is only some tolerable Defects and Inconveniences, there may be no separate Meeting; Separation in that Case, I think, is clearly Sinfull and unwarrantable, there is not any thing in all the Scripture to warrant it.

**CHAP. 39.** Though it should be granted that the Dissenting Ministers are valid Gospel-Ministers, and the proper Pastors of the People that adhere to them: yet Mr. Bennet hath a Third Charge against them, that they use an opposite Way of Worship, and therefore are Schismatics, this he prosecutes in divers Chapters. But still Mr. Bennet forgets his own just & necessary Concession, that both Parties agree in all Essentials and Fundamentals. That being supposed, of Necessity either both are Schismatics, or neither. There is great Diversity between the Cathedral-Way & the ordinary Parish-Church-Way as to many things in publick Worship outwardly, and yet you will not say that either of these are Schismatics because of such Diversity and Variety. If you will allow of no Diversity and Variety between one Congregation and another in publick Worship, then there must be stinted Sermons and Homilies appointed by publick Authority for all Ministers throughout the Kingdom, and they must all constantly insist upon the same Text, and have the same Words and Phrases. But this is such an Uniformity as hitherto our Rulers have not thought fit to impose, and I hope never will. A stinted Liturgy hath its Conveniences and Inconveniences, but it is not simply necessary to the Being and Unity of the Church, Schism is not caused by the Want of it, and when there is a stinted Liturgy, and all use it, Schism is not kept out.

**Prov. 13.** *Only by Pride cometh Contention,* not for Lack of a publick Liturgy, whether yours, or some other. If there be Christian Humility, that

**10.** will drive away Schism, without a stinted Liturgy: if there be reigning Pride and Ungodliness, there cannot but be internal Soul-ruining Schism, though there be a stinted Liturgy, consisting of publick Forms for Words and Method as holy and exact as the

**Jam. 4. 1.** *Lords-Prayer it self. From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members?* Not for want of the Common-Prayer-Book. For there are sad Numbers of ungodly Conformists, who have great Zeal for the Liturgy-Service, and yet they are ungodly, and all ungodly Sinners are very Schismatics: and look how many Sorts of ungodly ones there are, just so many Sorts of Schismatics there are. An ungodly Drunkard and

and an ungodly Fornicator are not the same Sinners, and yet they are both ungodly, inwardly disjoined from God and the Society of Saints, and inwardly joined to the Devil and the Society of Soul-destroying Sinners, and so they are both very Schismaticks inwardly. Bare external Agreement in publick Forms of Prayer, Confession of Sin, Praise, Sacrament-Service, and the like, without internal Piety, leaves Persons inwardly no Christians, no Members of the Church, but Enemies of God, and Children of the Devil, and if all such be not wicked Schismaticks, who are? But though there be Diversity between one Congregation and another, as to external Words, and Forms, and Things accidental and circumstantial: yet this hinders not but that they may both agree in the Substance and Foundation of Godliness, and be Sister-Congregations, and the gracious Presence of Christ may be in both.

CHAP. 40. Mr. B. says, we justify our Separation from Rome upon no other Principle but this, viz. because she imposes sinfull Terms of Lay-Communion. But this is a very lame Defence of our holy Reformation against the Papists. Locally we in England have not separated from Rome: for England stands where it did in Popish times, and we now serve God in those Temples and Chappels, without Popish Idolatry and Superstition, wherein the Papists anciently did serve God and Idols, like those in Israel who halted between God and Baal, and the English Papists locally separate from us without Cause, and not we from them. Asevery Person hath a Right to reform himself and his own Sins: So the supreme Powers in every Nation have a Right to make necessary National Reformations, without asking the Pope Leave, and Staying for his Consent: he is obliged by the Law of Christ to concur with us in what is good, but he hath no Power and Authority to let and hinder us from necessary-Duty. By claiming and exercising Papal Supremacy and Domination over all the Churches on Earth, and over supreme temporal Powers, the Pope makes himself a very Anti-Christ. Rome hath no more governing Supremacy over us, than Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch hath, that is, just none at all. Good Advice and Counsel is one thing, - Papal Domination and Usurpation is another thing. If the Bishop of Rome or any other Clergy-Man or Lay-Man should give us good Advice and Counsel, we are bound to accept it, and be thankfull. But this is quite a Different thing from Ambitious aspiring to be above God's Law, and taking on him to be a Deputy-Christ and a Deputy-God upon Earth, and making God's holy Ordinances of Magistracy and Ministry to hang upon him, and depend upon his Will and Pleasure. And why should you confine your Assertion to Lay-Communion, and think the Layety unconcerned if sinfull Terms of Clergy-Communion be imposed? If a corrupt Magistracy and a corrupt Clergy agree in Sin, is this nothing to God's People in -

*Hos. 2. 1. that Nation? Plead with your Mother, plead: for she is not my Wife, neither am I her Husband.* God's Saints have a Right to choose worthy Pastors, and to refuse the unworthy: they are to forsake such as be intolerable, and tolerate bad ones that be tolerable, when they cannot get good ones, they are not to live by blind self-deluding Faith in Clergy-Men, but by lively Heart-purifying Faith in God, and turn from those Pastors that turn from God, and adhere to those who adhere to God. And it belongeth to King Solomon to depose criminal Priest *Abiathar*, and set *Zadok* a worthy Man in his Room. Cesar under God is supreme Ruler by the Sword, and he is not to beare it in vain, he is to be a Nursing-Father to the Church, and protect good Pastors and People, and be a Terroure to bad ones: and if this had been duly done in every Christian Nation, the Papacy had never been known. But you, Mr. Bonner, seem to make Clergy-Men *Spiritual Magistrates*. For you tell us that by virtue of Christ's Law none are to be accounted *Spiritual Magistrates* or Clergy-Men, but such as are ordained by those who are already Clergy-Men themselves. But certainly Pastoral Authority is not Magistral. The Pastor ruleth by the Word, the Magistrate ruleth by the Sword: the Word taught by the Pastor is preceptive, and obligeth to Duty, but forceth no Man against his Will to be dutifull, and Pastors have no coactive Power. But the Magistrate hath lawfull coactive Power, and all the Clergy owe civil Subjection to Cesar, but Cesar hath no Superior but God.

*The Pref.* CHAP. 41. Mr. B. expects from his Adversaries that they should return a direct & satisfactory Answer to these Questions; 1. *Whether they do believe it lawfull to join in Lay-Communion with the established Church?* 2. *Whether, upon Supposition that it is lawfull to join in Lay-Communion with the established Church, it be not, in their Opinion, a Sin to separate from her?* I answer directly and plainly, that I do believe it lawfull to join in Lay-Communion with that which you call the established Church. But that which you count and call the established Church, is therefore a true Church, because it agreeth with the Dissenters in all Essentials and Fundamentals: and if the Dissenters are no true Church, you and your Party are no true Church. Admitting both to be a true Church, and true Ministry, and to be one in all Fundamentals and Essentials, that is enough for my Cause against you. For so it appears that though there be a kind of faulty Schism between the two Parties, yet it is not damnable and anti-fundamental. Pious Conformists and pious Dissenters will better bear to be counted faulty, Erroneous and deceived in some things remote from the Foundation, and Consistent with Godliness. For though pious Conformists think Conformity no Sin, and answerably pious Dissenters think their Non-Conforming-Way to be no Sin; yet they will both of them readily own that a kind of Sin is in them,

them, both of them are short of sinless Perfection. But if any shall impute to them Reigning & Soul-ruining Sin and Impiety, that is a Charge of a far higher Nature, and plainly intolerable: for upon the same Principle there is not one godly Person in all the Nation, in all the World. And what Godly Christian can bear the thought thereof? If you expect a more direct Answer to your Second Question, I do further declare without Hesitation, that if my Abode should be cast in a Place where I must either join with the Conforming Church, or none, I should think it my Duty and Priviledge to join with it, and a Sin in me to separate from it, and I had rather join in the poorest, weakest, darkest Conforming Congregation in *England* or *Wales*, supposing the Language intelligible; than sit at home and exercise my self in private Devotion, and join with none in God's publick Worship. But if my Abode should be cast in a Place where there is both a Conforming and Dissenting Ministry and Congregation, equally near, equally protected by the Magistrate in their different Ways, and I were to act as a Lay-Christian, I do declare I cannot now precisely say what I should practise, unless I were upon the Spot, and the Case, with all the Circumstances and things to be considered, were before me. But I should think it my great Duty chiefly to mind and practise those main and Master-Truths and Principles in which both sides agree, and rejoice in the Conversion of Sinners, and in the Comfort of God's People, and so to walk as to be a Blessing, Encouragement and Comfort to every good and faithfull Minister of Christ, and be like *Demetrius*, having good Report of all Men, and of the Truth it self.

CHAP. 42. You say, Certainly nothing but the Danger of Damnation The Pres. by Conformity, can justify Non-Conformity. — if they do not believe that Conformity will damn their Souls, they are indispensably bound to practise it. What Danger of Damnation do you and your Party incur by forbearing to impose upon God's Ministers and People, things unnecessary, which God hath no where obliged you to impose? But wherein do all Dissenters incur the Peril of Damnation, while they cordially agree with you in all Fundamentals, and if they could discern it their Duty to Conform, would quickly Conform? There is such a thing as civil Liberty and Freedom from Bondage and temporal Trouble and Vexation, which is very valuable and desirable. We see in our Nation there are divers *exempt Jurisdictions*, which the Bishops themselves allow to be lawfull, and the Possessors of those *exempt Jurisdictions*, are tenacious thereof, and are not free to part with them, though if they had not those *exempt Jurisdictions*, their Souls would not therefore be in any Peril of Damnation. By the Favour and Indulgence of the Government, the Dissenters are an *exempt Jurisdiction*, freed from Vexatious Prosecution in the Bishops Courts upon the Account of Non-Conformity, truly this is no small Priviledge. For those Courts are well known

p. 126.

to be in an ill Name, they do *male* *audire* hear ill all over the Nation, no body speaks well of them, it is a Priviledge and Happineſs to be out of their reach, and ſecure from their Oppreſſions, Exactions, Tyranny, unjuſt Domination: this Priviledge the Diſſenters have, and yet if they had it not, their Souls would not therefore be lyable to endleſs Damnation. You Mr. Bennes ſay of ſuch Diſſenters as have *honestly uſed their utmoſt endeavours to be rightly inſtructed concerning theſe Matters, and do ſtill think it unlawfull to join with the eſtabliſhed Church; I doubt not but God will pity and pardon their Miſtakes. Their Separation indeed is Schiſmatical; but I am perſuaded, that our Heavenly Father will not impute their Schiſm to them, becauſe 'twas impoſſible for them to diſcover the Sin, and thereby to avoid the Commiſſion of it.* But if really we are all bound under Pain of eternal Damnation to Conform to the things in Queſtion, and if Schiſm be a Sin of the blackeſt Nature, and deepeſt Die, and Deſtructive of the Soul, and the Diſſenters becauſe they are Diſſenters, are chargeable with this dreadful Sin, (as you alleadge and aſſert) then all the Diſſenters muſt needs be ungodly Sinners, and ſo dying there can be no Hope of them. Though Ignorance may excuſe from a greater Measure of Damnation, yet not from Damnation, where it is accompanied with Ungodlineſs. The Servant that knows not his Lord's Will, and yet doeth Things worthy of Stripes, ſhall be beaten, though with few Stripes, but beaten he ſhall be. Paul before his Conversion was through Ignorance an ungodly Perſecutor, and had he ſo died certainly he had been damned. There is therefore a Contradiſtion in your Doctrin, you impute Soul-deſtroying Schiſm to the Diſſenters, becauſe Diſſenters: and yet acquit ſuch among them as be Conſcientious from that Sin.

p. 69.

CHAP. 43. You ſay, *Bleſſed be God, our Laws are very good; but they want Execution.* But the *Act of Uniformity* is no very good Law: For how can that be a very good Law, which impoſeth ſundry unneceſſary and inexpedient things in Gods Service, under a ſevere Penalty? All human Laws concerning the Worſhip and Service of God, ought to be ſo framed, as to be duly ſubordinate to the Laws of God, and to afford Protection in all fundamental Rights to all that cordially agree in all Fundamentals, and are in ſome meaſure good Chriſtians and good Subjects. But thus doth not the *Act of Uniformity* upon your own Grounds and Principles; for you confeſs, that the Diſſenters agree with you in all Eſſentials and Fundamentals. Then if you be good Miniſters, Chriſtians, Subjects, ſo are they in ſome meaſure; if they be Hypocrites, Schiſmaticks, Rebels, infamous Men, deſerving to be ſilenced, excommunicated, thruſt into Barnes, ſo are you; if the Church and the Commonwealth need you, it doth alſo need them; if it cannot ſubſiſt without you, neither can it ſubſiſt without them; if the *Act of Toleration* be enough for them, why is it not alſo enough for you? But  
whoſe

whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better Mat. 18.  
 for him that a Millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drown-<sup>6</sup>  
 ed in the depth of the Sea. The *Act of Uniformity* hath offended, and  
 continueth to offend not barely one, but Hundreds and Thousands  
 of Christ's little Ones which believe in him, and are truly precious  
 in his sight, by standing, belying, defaming, excluding out of the  
 Church, and dealing unchristianly with Multitudes of good Chri-  
 stians and good Ministers, either for no Fault at all, or if it be a  
 Fault, it is not so in the Judgement of those whose it is, it is cer-  
 tainly no great Fault; all the Learning and Ability of the Bishops,  
 and their Adherents, cannot make it infallibly evident and plain to  
 the Consciences of Dissenters that it is a Fault; notwithstanding  
 it, God doth graciously accept them, and love and delight in them;  
 and is not severe, but merciful and kind toward them. And can  
 the *Act of Uniformity* be a good Law, a very good Law, which is so  
 contrary to the Goodness, Mercy and Clemency of Christ towards  
 Thousands of pious and peaceable Dissenters, far exceeding the *Act*  
 of *Uniformity* it self in Goodness and Innocency? It were better for  
 it that a Millstone were hanged about its Neck, and it were drown-  
 ed in the Depth of the Sea, than that it should be a Snare to our  
 Nation, and draw down Guilt upon it, as it doth, by offending  
 Christ in Thousands of pious Conformists and Non-Conformists. For  
 even pious Conformists do sincerely desire its *Abolition*, and in its  
 stead a mild and gentle Law, comprehensive and inclusive of all that  
 Christ, the Lord and King of the Church, willeth and obligeth to  
 be included and comprehended, without leaving out any one. For  
 it but one of Christ's little ones believing in him, be offended, scanda-  
 lized, persecuted, shut out of the Church and Church-protection,  
 Christ himself dwelling in that one by precious Faith, is offended,  
 persecuted, and shut out as a Schismatick, the Cause is his. *Arise,*  
*O God, plead thine own Cause.*

CHAP. 44. Seeing you say, *Blessed be God, our Laws are very good;*  
*but, alas! they want Execution.* Let me have free leave to reason with  
 you, my Reverend and Learned Brother, in a few Words, touch-  
 ing the Constitution of the Bishops-Court, and our Laws which  
 uphold it; for it nearly concerns the Cause in hand, the Justifica-  
 tion of Dissenters from your Charge of damnable Schism. I shall  
 not meddle with any Man's personal Miscarriage, contrary to his  
 Office, and the Duty of his Place, but only with the very Being,  
 Constitution and Foundation of the Bishops-Court, and such Enor-  
 mities and Corruptions as, in my Opinion, do naturally and una-  
 voidably flow from its very Constitution, in respect of the Judicial  
 Excommunications decreed therein, and the consequent *Writ de*  
*Excommunicato capiendo*, issuing out of the High Court of Chancery, up-  
 on a *Significavit*, and Petition from the Bishops-Court. *Either this*

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Court is a *Civil* and *Temporal* Court by Authority derived from the Queen as Supreme Ruler by the Sword, or a *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Court by Divine Authority superior to her. If the former, then *quo jure*, by what Right doth the Bishops-Court take upon it to judge of *Censures* meerly *Spiritual*, and judicially to sentence and decree Persons excommunicate and cut off from the Church of God, as *Heathen Men and Publicans*? As is the Fountain, so must needs be the Streams; and as is the Cause, so must needs be the Effect. Now the Queen, under God, being Supreme, Civil and Temporal Ruler by the Sword, she can have no Power, Authority and Jurisdiction but what is Civil and Temporal, no other can be derived from her, she can inflict no Punishment but what is Civil and Temporal. If therefore one Civil and Temporal Court, by Authority derived from the Queen, be Judge of *Censures* meerly *Spiritual*, and hath Authority judicially to decree Persons excommunicate and cut off from the Church of God, then all the Courts in *Westminster-Hall*, all Corporation-Courts, the County-Court, the Court-Baron, the Leet-Court, the Quarter-Sessions-Court, the Judges of Assize in their yearly Circuits: All these Courts must needs be Judges of *Censures* meerly *Spiritual*, and have like Power in Judicial Excommunications with the Bishops Court. For a *quatenus ad omne valet Argumentum*, that which agreeth to a Civil and Temporal Court as such, agreeth to all Civil and Temporal Courts, whether Supreme or Subordinate. But it is a Repugnancy to the Nature of a *Censure* meerly *Spiritual*, to proceed from a Court meerly Civil and Temporal. If the Bishops-Court pretend to be a *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Court, by Divine Authority Superior to the Queen, and claim *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Jurisdiction Superior to Regal Supremacy, then by this very Pretence and Claim the Bishops-Court makes it self Papal, Antichristian, Anti-evangelical, like that Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

1 Thess. 2.  
3, 4.

CHAP. 45. Upon this Principle the Queen her self is liable to be cited and summoned by a common Apparitor, to appear at the Bishops-Court, and there to humble and degrade her self, and subject her Crown and Regal Supremacy to the Ecclesiastical Judge, who being supposed to have *Spiritual* and *Eternal* Jurisdiction, thereby he is nothing inferior to God; who may say unto him, *What doest thou?* By this Principle he hath Power to depose the Queen, to tread the Crown under foot, and to do what he list, without being accountable to any, he may say with the proud Prince of Tyrrus, *I am a God, I sit in the Seat of God.* Moreover, upon this Principle the Act of Toleration is made void, and the Dissenters can have no Benefit by it: For that Act gives them only a Civil and Temporal

Exek. 28.

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ral Impunity, and doth not in the least free them from *Censures* *merely Spiritual*, and from *Spiritual Judicature*. If therefore the Bishops-Court be a Spiritual and Eternal Court, and the Jurisdiction thereof be Spiritual and Eternal, and the judicial Excommunications therein decreed, be *Censures merely Spiritual*, then all the Dissenters are continually liable to be cited, summoned, prosecuted and proceeded against in that Court, for their Non-Conformity; and if they condemn the Court, to be judicially excommunicated, and so to be doomed to Hell in respect of their Souls, and laid in Prison in respect of their Bodies, till they make their Peace with that Court, and so the Supreme Authority of the Queen and Parliament is made void by the Papal Usurpation, and Domination of the Bishops-Court. How the Bishops-Court can be reformed, and reduced to a tolerable and good Consistency, without abolishing its present Constitution, and taking from it all Power of judicial Excommunication, I, for my part, do not see. While it is in the Power of this Court by judicial Excommunication, *quantum in se*, to damn our Souls, and by the imprisoning Writ to lay our Bodies in Prison without Bail, till we idolize the *Mock-Fulmination*, there is small hope of seeing our Nation united and reformed, as it should be. As it is the Court of *Rome* that doth principally hinder the Reformation of the Church of *Rome*, so it is the Bishops Court which doth principally hinder due Reformation in *England*, and doth cause and keep up the Breach between Protestant Dissenters and Conformists, in a great measure.

CHAP. 46. The Church of God doth not make criminal Christians, but finds them so made by their own Wilfulness and ill Choice; and in order to their Repentance and Salvation, she useth all good Means appointed by Christ; and perceiving them obstinate in Sin, she doth not judicially cut them off from the Church, but doth doctrinally denounce and declare them to be by their own Obstinacy in Sin, already cut off: and this her Sentence is not Penal, but Medicinal; not killing, but curing; not destructive, but salutiferous, in Case the Delinquent do his Duty, and do not by Contempt and Impenitency make his Wound incurable, and his Case remediless. Judicial Excommunication and Absolution, Judicial Remitting and Retaining Sins, the Church leaveth unto God and the Lord Jesus, to whom alone it doth appertain. The Pope, by usurping the Power of Judicial Excommunication and Absolution, of Judicial Remitting and Retaining Sins, of Judicial Damning and Undamning Men, according as they condemn or idolize his Papal Usurpation, hath made himself a very Anti-Christ, and turned the Church into a worldly Monarchy, and made Kings and Emperours his Slaves and Vassals, by the Terroure of imaginary and Ludicrous Judicial Excommunication. Indeed the Word of God in  
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the Mouth of the meanest Minister, Lay-man, Woman, is Superior to the highest on Earth, and to the Angels of Heaven, as truly as in the Mouth of an Apostle; for God's Word gains no Authority by being in the Mouth of an Apostle, and it looſeth no Authority by being in the Mouth of the meanest Minister, or Lay-man, or Woman; thoſe Parts of Canonical Scripture which were uttered by *Deborah*, *Hannah*, the bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, being Canonical Scripture, and of Divine Authority, no leſs than what was uttered by Prophets and Apoſtles, and the Man Chriſt Jeſus. But Biſhops-Courts do not conſiſt by God's Word, but by the temporal Sword, by the Law of the Land, which ſuffers them judicially to excommunicate and abſolve, or judicially to Decree *Cenſures merely Spiritual*, and thereby, and by the conſequent imprifoning Writ and other civil Sanctions and Punishments, to keep the Nation in ſlaviſh Awe, and undermine both Magiſtracy and Miniſtry. *Ambroſe*, Biſhop of *Millain*, forbade the good Emperour *Theodoſius* from entering into the Church, becauſe of an unadviſed and cruel Slaughter of the Innocent, together with the Nocent at *Theſſalonica*; and he continued ſix or ſeven Months under this Spiritual Cenſure. But all this while civil Allegiance was due, and duly paid to him, from his Subjects, this Spiritual Cenſure did not deprive him of natural and civil Rights, ſtill he was lawfull Emperour, none went about to depoſe him, to imprifon him, to lay any temporal Punishment upon him. Now if civil Allegiance, and all civil Rights, be due from Subjects to an excommunicated King, notwithstanding that Spiritual Cenſure; then by the ſame reaſon, reciprocally, Protection in all civil Rights muſt needs be due from the King to an excommunicated Subject, notwithstanding that Spiritual Cenſure. For though as to this preſent Life, and civil Affairs, there be great Difference between King and Subject: yet as to Spiritual and Eternal Matters there is plainly no difference. God hath ordained but one Chriſt, but one Bible, but one Baptiſm, but one Lord's-Supper, but one Way to Heaven for both. An ungodly King is as lyable to endless Damnation as an ungodly Subject; for God is no reſpecter of Perſons. If therefore an Excommunicate Subject, becauſe Excommunicate and Contemning the Spiritual Cenſure, do forfeit natural and civil Rights, and be lyable to Imprifoment, till he make his Peace with the Papal Court; then by the ſame reaſon an Excommunicate King, becauſe Excommunicate and Contemning the Spiritual Cenſure, doth forfeit his Crown and Kingdom, and the Papal Court hath Power to depoſe him, to Imprifon him, till he humble himſelf at the Feet of the Papal Court, and ſay, O Papal Court, thou art my Superior, I own my ſelf thy Vaſſal, I lay my Crown at thy Feet, thou art an Eccleſiaſtical Deity, thy Will is Law, I may not gainſay thee in the leaſt, leſt thou judicially retain my Sins, and

and thereby shut me out of Heaven, and doom me to Hell for ever.

**CHAP. 47.** Doctrinal Excommunication doth inseparably go along with the right Ministry of the Word and Sacraments; for every Gospel-Minister hath Power and Authority from Christ by good Doctrine to difference between the Precious and the Vile, to keep the Sacraments pure and uncorrupt, publickly and privately to reprove, rebuke, admonish, exhort with all Long-suffering and Truth, to remit the Sins of the Penitent, to retain the Sins of the Impenitent, to open and apply God's Word to all in general, and to this or that Criminal Christian in particular for his Spiritual Profit, and to withhold Baptism and the Lord's Supper from every one that is manifestly unfit to partake thereof, though he be a King or an Emperour. For none is above the Reproofs and Instructions of God's Word, and Heavenly Discipline grounded on it, and being for the good of the Soul. This Word doth doctrinally and authoritatively denounce and declare all ungodly Sinners, whether Clergy or Layety, Rulers or Ruled, Male or Female, to be in a state of Condemnation, and so dying there can be no Hope of them. This Word is believed and reduced to holy Practice by all godly Persons every where upon Earth, and by them only; and therefore they do carefully shun the bad Life and Ways of ungodly Sinners, and will have no Fellowship with them in God-hating and Soul-destroying Ways. This is Doctrinal Excommunication out of Question with all that fear God; and it is all the Excommunication that God hath ordained in his Church, and which Christ and his Apostles did practise, (excepting what miraculous Power they might have over and besides;) it is abundantly enough, and it is in some Measure constantly practised wheresoever God hath a true Church by sound Doctrine, Invocation, Sacraments, holy Obedience. Even *Erastus* himself is not against, but for this Doctrinal Excommunication, and those that say otherwise of him (as many do) Mistake and Misreport him. Judicial Excommunication belongeth to God and the Lord Jesus only, it hath two Degrees, one is at Death, then God doth judicially and invisibly doom the Soul of the ungodly Sinner to Hell: the other Degree will be at the Day of Judgment, then God will most fully adjudge all the Wicked to endless Damnation, and presently execute the Sentence in eternal Vengeance, this is Judicial Excommunication. As for the Judicial Excommunication Decreed in Bishops Courts, it is no Gospel-Ordinance, but a Lie, and by this Lie all the Bishops-Courts in *England* consist; and a Lie is not capable of being reformed save by Gospel-Repentance and Mortification. Whether you place the Power of this Judicial Excommunication transacted in the Bishops-Court, in the Clergy, or in the Layety, or in the Magistracy, or in all of them

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Conjunct : whether you place it in a single Person, or in a plurality of Persons, with, or without a Moderator, it all comes to one, it is no Gospel-Ordinance, it is only *Brutum fulmen*, an Ecclesiastical Scarcrow, lacking all Spiritual Vigour, it is no more Excommunication and cutting off from God's Church judicially, than painted Fire is true Fire, than a lewd Wife is a chaste Woman. Very great is the Obscurity, Uncertainty, Confusion, Controversy and Contradiction of Ecclesiastical Writers about this Judicial Excommunication Decreed by Men. Hence Mr. Vines says, *we know rather the Name of, than the Nature of the Thing, Excommunication.*

of the Sacram. pag. 196.

CHAP. 48. Dr. Hammond in the Preface to his Book *Of the Power of the Keyes*, in effect says the same, and contradicts himself. He condemns both *Beza* and *Eraſtus*, and after all his high Praises of Judicial Excommunication as a prime Gospel-Ordinance, of very great Excellency and Necessity in the Church, he quite undoes his Cause, and subverts his whole Book as to the main Scope of it, by telling us that Judicial Excommunication is *so either wholly dilapidated, or piteously deformed, as to continue in the Church only under one of these two Notions, either of an empty Piece of Formality, or of an Engine of State, and secular Contrivance, &c.* and he makes it to be well-nigh vanished out of Christendom, and he calls it, *the almost only Piece of Reformation which this Church of England, — may justly be thought to stand in need of.* But if Judicial Excommunication as distinct from Doctrinal, be a prime Gospel-Ordinance and of so great usefulness in the Church, how is it possible that it should be well-nigh vanished out of Christendom, and no where to be found in its native Purity, unless in the imaginary conceits of Dr. Hammond and a few such other Authors? Have we no Gospel, no Godliness, no holy Society in England? Hath the holy Catholick Church and the Communion of Saints, quite forsaken the Earth, and is there nothing now to be found among Christians but Anti-Christianism, Infidelity and the Kingdom of the Devil? Rather may we not well think that this Thing, *Judicial Excommunication Decreed in Bishops-Courts*, is an Idol, a meer Fiction, the main uphold of the *Papacy*? For what is Judicial Excommunication and Absolution, but Judicial Retaining and Remitting Sins? and who but God alone can judicially remit and retain Sins? If Men also can do this, what difference can there be between God and Men? *Receive ye the holy Ghost. Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* Here we see the Holy Ghost first given and received, and then Power to remit and retain Sins: and therefore unless the Holy Ghost be first given and received, there is no Power to remit & retain Sins. Now the Holy Ghost is never Contrary to his holy Word. His holy Word doth ever Doctrinally and Authoritatively remit all the Sins of all the Evangelically penitent, & of no other: & retain all the

Job. 20.

the Sins of all the Ungodly and Impenitent, and of no other, from the Fall of Adam to the End of the World. They therefore that retain the Sins of any whom God knows to be Evangelically Penitent, & remit the Sins of any whom God knows to be Ungodly & Impenitent, do in both Cases act contrary to the Holy Ghost and to his holy Word, and make themselves accursed, and overthrow the Gospel, and their Sentences are of no Force at all save for the Condemnation of the Authors and Upholders of such Execrable and Anti-Evangelical Enormities. The Bishop of London, (who I suppose is Mr. Bennet's Diocesan,) tells us a strange Case of one excommunicated with the greater Excommunication, if at the Hour of Death he seem heartily penitent, questionless Absolution may be Administred to him: *which will have its effect in Foro interno according to God's Acceptance, and his own Sincerity: tho the Sentence fori externi be not thereby released.* But where hath God given your Court, or any other Court under Heaven, Power to retain the Sins of those whom he by his everlasting Gospel doth absolve? and to curse and damn those whom he doth bleis and save? If the Man die Penitent and pardoned, and his Soul be blessed in Heaven, what may we think of your Court that by Judicial Sentence keeps him unabsolved, unreleased unpardoned, under Condemnation? Is not this your Judicial Sentence plainly repugnant to the everlasting Gospel? Must God by a Miracle raise him from the Dead, that he may come to your Court in Person, and humble himself, and testify his Repentance, and beg your Absolution? Or must God send an Angel from Heaven on purpose to certifie you, that his Sins are remitted in Heaven, and he is for ever blessed, and to desire you no longer to retain his Sins on Earth?

**CHAP. 49.** Certainly he only can judicially remit Sins, who can give Faith and Repentance and Perseverance and Consequent eternal Salvation, and this none can do but God and the Lord Jesus. And he only can judicially retain Sins, who is Judge of all the Earth, and can cast both Soul and Body into Hell for ever: and none can do this but only God and the Lord Jesus. The two first pardoned Persons were Penitent Adam and Eve, and certainly they had their Pardon and Absolution not partly from God, and partly from some other, but entirely from God onely and his special Grace in Christ, as all in all. And so it hath been ever since: for *primum in unoquoque genere est mensura sequentium*, the first in every kind is the Measure of all that follow in the same kind. *I, even I am he that blotte out thy Transgressions for mine own sake.* The Apostles themselves were not without Sins; who did judicially remit their Sins? partly God, and partly themselves? Surely no, but God alone did remit their Sins upon their cordial Repentance, and so it is as to all other; For though God make use of Apostles, Prophets, Evange-  
Episcopa-  
lia p. 52.

lists, Pastors and Teachers in Remitting the Sins of others; yet Remission of Sins is not partly from God, and partly from his Ministers, but from him alone as all in all. It is according to his Word that God doth remit and retain Sins, and where is this Word to be found? It is publickly taught by all true Ministers: but many that are valid Ministers are ungodly Men, and all ungodly Men are inwardly *extra Ecclesiam*, out of the Church. God's Word is no where to be found soundly believed and reduced to holy Practice,

*Philip. 2.* but among real Saints, these live *in the mids of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom they shine as Lights in the World, holding forth the Word of Life*; and by exemplary holding forth the Word of Life, they do after a Spiritual manner censure, judge and condemn the wicked World, even all ungodly Sinners every where, and thus they doctrinally bind Sins on Earth, and God doth bind them in Heaven; and doctrinally they remit Sins on Earth, and God doth remit them in Heaven. *Gal. 4.* But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all. It is this Heavenly Jerusalem, the mystical Body of Christ; the blessed Company of all faithfull People, which is the Mother of all good Christians.

**CHAP. 50.** This good Mother doth by Authority received from Christ, account all her Children that are Children of God by heavenly Regeneration, every one of these she owns her self the Mother of, and doth embrace with most tender Love. But all ungodly Sinners whether Christians or Heathens, she doth reject, because they reject Christ: and though ungodly Christians honour Christ verbally, yet really they dishonour him, and by reigning Unbelief and Ungodliness cast themselves out of the Bosom of the universal Church, and join themselves to the Synagogue of Satan. Ministers indeed are by God appointed to be Pastors and Teachers in his Church, and they are to Rule and Discipline it by God's Word, unto which Word all are to yield Obedience and Subjection. But *de facto* none but real Saints do yield sincere Obedience, the Obedience of Faith, to God's holy Word, all real Saints upon Earth do, and these are the universal Church militant on Earth consisting only of godly ones in Christ Jesus. This holy universal Church militant is the Spouse of Christ, built by him upon a sure Rock, against which the Gates of Hell cannot prevall, she is by him infallibly guided into all saving Truth, and preserved from Idolatry, Heresie, Anti-Christianism, and all Soul-ruining Errour, Schism, Deceit, Mispractice. For Christ dwelleth in the Heart of every real Saint by precious Faith, and where two or three are met together in Christ's Name, there is he in the midst of them by the invisible Operation of his Word and Holy Spirit, Pardoning their Sins, Sanctifying their Natures, and keeping them from the Evil that is in the World, and Christ is graciously with all real Saints on Earth  
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always even unto the End of the World. And therefore *ex natura rei* it is this Society of militant Saints which is the Conservor of holy Discipline. For where shall holy Discipline be found, but among them that are really holy? It is not to be found among the bare verbal Professors of Holiness, but among those who are the real Practisers of it. The Sum of holy Discipline is plainly this, *doing justly, and loving Mercy, and walking humbly with our God*: this is invariably the Sum of holy Discipline from the Fall of Adam to the End of the World, if you make it to consist in any other Thing you quite mistake the Nature of it. Now all ungodly Princes, Magistrates, Judges, Arch-Bishops, Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors, and all other Ungodly ones, do by their ungodly Hearts and Lives destroy holy Discipline, they are inwardly no Christians. But godly Princes, Magistrates, Judges, Arch-Bishops, Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors, are the Conservors of holy Discipline, not because of their Civil or Ecclesiastical Office, but because they are truly godly in Christ Jesus in common with all other Saints. *The Holy Seed is the Substance of Families, Congregations, Towns, Parishes, Cities, Nations, every where, as to Acceptance with God and keeping up holy Discipline: and unholy and wicked Ones every where are the Destroyers of it, and the very Plagues of the Church.*

CHAP. 51. There is a great Deale of hurtfull Dispute, Obscurity, and Self-contradiction among the Learned about the Power of the Keys, the true Doctrine whereof in my Opinion is thus very Briefly stated, and a compendious Way opened for the Ending of all Controversies about it among godly Men. When Christ says—*to Peter, I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, here it *Mat. 16* is very reasonable to think that Peter is considered, either as a Saint, 19 or as an Apostle, or as a common Minister. 1. If the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven be given to Peter considered as a Saint, then certainly they are given to all that are Saints, and to none but Saints, and consequently they were not given to the Apostle Judas, *See B.* he being no Saint, but a wicked Man and the Son of Perdition; they *Andrew* are not given to any ungodly Arch-Bishop, Bishop, Presbyter, *Tortura* Clergy-Man, Ecclesiastical Judge: they are given only to holy *Tort. p. 436.* Ones, Men, Women, Children, to all that are by the Grace of Christ inwardly holy. And there is great reason for it: for God 43 gives the Kingdom of Heaven to all real Saints only, and therefore he must needs give them the Keys which do unlock it, and open the Door thereof, and give them Entrance into it, and Right unto it, and serve to put them in Possession of it. Doubtless Christ in giving the Kingdom of Heaven to his Saints, doth give them Regeneration and Perseverance in Grace, this being the Key which gives them Entrance into it, and true Right to the Kingdom of Heaven as a Reward of Grace, by reason of God's Promise in Christ.

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2. If the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven be given to *Peter* as an Apostle, then certainly they were given to all the Apostles equally and alike, & to none other; it was a personal Privilege belonging to them only, and when they died, it ceased, and there can be no Successor in it. 3. If they were given to *Peter*, considered as a common Minister, then they are given to all Presbyters and common Ministers to the End of the World. The Keys, in this Sense, is Authority to preach the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to remit the Sins of the Penitent, to retain the Sins of the Impenitent, to discipline and rule the Church by God's Word, to ordain Ministers in way of holy Concord.

**CHAP. 52.** If judicial Excommunication decreed in the Bishops-Court be a prime Gospel-ordinance, and of so great Use in the Church, why did not our Lord Jesus Christ when he was upon Earth set up such a Court, and sit Judge in it, and after a worldly and imperial manner by an Apparitor, Licor, Serjeant, Bailiff cite and summon Delinquents to appear before him, in order to judicial Binding their Sins on Earth like as they are bound in Heaven? It never came into his Heart to do such a thing; he himself was convicted, arraigned, judged and condemned in a Court, and the Magistracy, Clergy and common Multitude in *Jerusalem* concurred in his Condemnation and Execution, but he never sat Judge in any Court, he renounced and declaimed all judicial Authority, as what did not belong to him in his State of Humiliation, but only to God, and to the Prince and Magistracy appointed to rule by the Sword.

*Luk. 12.* *Man, who made me a Judge or a Divider over you?* That is, I am no Magistrate, I as Man in my State of Humiliation have no judicial, imperial and coercive Authority; my Business is not to lord and command, but to obey and serve; not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give my Life a Ransom and Counterprize for the Sins

*John 18.* of all true Believers. *My Kingdom is not of this World:* And consequently Christ in his State of Humiliation was no Magistrate; for all magistratical Power is of this World. Magistracy is God's holy Ordinance for the good of fallen Man by the Grace of Redemption; and therefore it was the Duty of Christ, as Man, to honour Magistracy, and to be duly subject to it, for an Example to all his Followers, and this he hath done most eminently. But if Christ, as Man, had set up an Ecclesiastical and Disciplinary Court, and made himself Judge therein by pretended Authority from God, and therein had exercised Judicial Authority after the manner of the Pope and his Adherents, then he had been the Subverter of Magistracy and Ministry, he had not been Jesus Christ, but an Impostor and Deceiver, like another *Mahomet*, whose Kingdom is of this World, and consists in earthly Sovereignty and ruling by the Sword. The Kingdom of Christ is altogether Spiritual, Invisible, Divine, Ever-

Everlasting, it ruleth over all, both Angels and Men, for the good of his Church on Earth; which Church doth consist entirely by God's Word believed and observed, and by no other thing. But this Word taught by Christ, by Apostles, by ordinary Ministers, is not coercive, but preceptive; it obligeth all to be holy, but compelleth none against his Will to be holy; for *ex natura rei* no Man can be a Christian, holy, dutiful and obedient to God against his Will. And where is no coercive Authority, there can be no judicial Authority; for judicial Authority, not coercive against the stubborn and contumacious, is ridiculous; What signifies God's own judicial Authority over Devils and stubborn rebellious Men, if he cannot force them against their Will to suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire? And if they may at their pleasure blaspheme him, despise him, and break his Laws, and he cannot call them to account, nor force them by Punishment to smart for their Presumption, then he is plainly no God, but a ridiculous Vanity. And what signifies the judicial Authority of the Parent and Master in his Family, and of the Schoolmaster in the School, and of the Queen in the Commonwealth, and of the Judge upon the Bench, and of the General in the Army, if it be altogether uncoercive against stubborn Children, Scholars, Subjects, Soldiers, contumacious Inferiors? What signify all the judicial Sentences in *Westminster-hall*, if People may observe them or not, as they list, and there be no way to compel any against their Will to stand to them? They are no judicial Sentences, but ludicrous and ridiculous Dreams. *Ex natura rei* judicial Authority is a meer empty Name, unless it be coercive Authority against the contumacious; and certainly all coercive Authority is either Eternal or Temporal. Eternal coercive Authority belongeth to none but God: temporal coercive Authority is a thing common to Christians and Heathens, it belongs to Parents, Princes, Magistrates, Civil Rulers, and not to Pastors and Teachers, not to Gospel-ministers. And consequently Gospel-ministers, whether in Synod or out of Synod, have no judicial Authority, no coercive Power, but only doctrinal, stewardly and ministerial.

CHAP. 53. The Gospel taught by a common Minister, is superior to the highest on Earth, but we can compel no Man to obey it against his Will; all under Pain of endless Damnation are bound to be holy and obedient to the Gospel; but if they will not be holy and obedient to the Gospel, we cannot compel them. We can only deal with their Consciences by opening to them their Duty from God's Word, and their Happiness, if they keep it, and their Misery, if they disobey it; it is Punishment enough to them that they are ungodly, and liable to God's Eternal Vengeance. In withholding either Sacrament from those who are utterly and notoriously unfit to partake thereof, we do not punish them, but pity them,  
love

love their Souls, and do them a Kindness; we do not exercise judicial Authority, but necessary Discretion, Fidelity to God and to their Souls, just Zeal, Courage and Constancy in Duty, which are no judicial Matters, but things that carry their own Authority along with them, and commend themselves to every Man's Conscience in the Sight of God. The Church of God is the Society of Militant Saints, no Man can be a Member of this Society but by his own free Consent; no Man can be excluded & shut out of it but by his own Unbelief and Wickedness. Regeneration admits into this Society, Unregeneration keeps out of it. True it is, that ungodly Christians are *Secundum quid* Christians, the Children of the Kingdom; but *Simpliciter* and inwardly they are not Christians, and therefore if they die ungodly Christians, they shall be cast out into outer Darkness. The Apostles indeed smote *Ananias* and *Sapphira* with sudden Death, and *Elymas* the Sorcerer with sudden Blindness; but herein they did not act as Magistrates, but as extraordinary Gospel - Ministers by miraculous Power; they did not exercise judicial Authority, but Ministerial and Stewardly Authority by miraculous Gift. And in these very Instances they did not, they could not force the Offenders so punished to be holy and dutifull against their Will.

Matt. 8.  
12.

CHAP. 54. The Bishops-Court hath its Authority either from Heaven or of Men, or it hath no Authority all, but is a Usurpation, is necessarily, either God's Court, or Man's Court, or the Devil's Court. 1. If it be God's Court and have its Authority from Heaven, there can lye no appeal from it either to the Arch-Bishop, or to the Queen and Parliament; For every regular Appeal is from an Inferior Judicatory to a Superior. But there can be none Superior to God. If therefore the Bishops-Court be God's Court, it is certainly Supreme, Independent, Invisible, Infallible in all its Sentences, Decrees and Proceedings, the Judge thereof is not a Man, not a meer Creature, but one Coequal and Coeternal with God. 2. If it be Man's Court, and have its Authority from Men, it must be the Court of one that is either Supreme or Subject. Under God the Queen is sole-supreme Ruler by the Sword, but the Sword is meerly Civil and Temporal, and not any thing Spiritual and Eternal. If therefore this be the Queens Court consisting by the temporal Sword, then let it claim and exercise only civil and temporal Jurisdiction, and I will not at all oppose it, but in my Place contend for it. But if being a civil and temporal Court consisting by the Sword, it presume to Lord and Domineer over the Consciences of Christian People, and to damn and undamn precious Souls, according as they shall condemn or idolize its ungodly Usurpation; and the higher Powers in England shall contentedly make themselves Licitors and Sergeants, Bailiffs and Officers to the Papal Supremacy of the Bishop and his Vigar in Spirituals, and accomodate this Court with the Imprisoning Writ and other civil Sanctions, and thereby establish Iniquity by Law,

Law, and keep up Oppression, Injustice, Extortion, Hypocrisie, Profanation of God's glorious and fearfull Name, and there be no Remedy, God be mercifull to our Nation, and incline the Hearts of the Conforming Nobility, Gentry, & Commonalty, of the Magistracy & Conforming Clergy wisely to consider, and lay to Heart this Thing. If this Court be the Court of some Subject by Authority derived from the Crown, still it can be but a Civil and temporal Court, it can have no Authority judicially to remit and retain Sins, judicially to Decree *Censures meerly Spiritual*, after a profane and worldly Manner to the great Scandal of the Gospel, and the Grief of all good Men. Power judicially to remit and retain Sins, to damn and undamn Souls, to join Persons to and separate them from the Church of God, is certainly the Highest Power, and belongs to him only who hath all Power both in Heaven and on Earth. 3. If this Court be neither God's Court, nor Man's Court, then it must needs be the Devils Court, a Usurpation upon the Authority both of God and Man -- the Devil can transform himself into an *Angel of Light*, and therefore it is no great thing if his Ministers also be transformed as the *Ministers of Righteousness*. The Apostle Peter meant well when ignorantly he gave Christ very bad Counsel; But Christ perceived Satan himself by Peter to be the Author of that Counsel; and therefore Christ spared not to give him a most Cutting rebuke, *Get thee behind me, Satan*, *Mat. 16*. *thou art an Offence unto me: for thou Savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men*. This Court is counted and called the Spiritual Court, the Court Christian, and pretends to proceed *pro Saluta anima & pro reformatione morum*: and if it should not pretend Holiness, and Zeal for God, and greatest Kindness to Souls, and Care of the Church, it could not deceive as it doth by Judicial Excommunication and Absolution, by Judicial Spiritual Censures, condemning those whom God doth absolve, absolving those whom God doth condemn, and making holy Discipline to consist in unholy Devices to get Money.

CHAP. 55. The Wisdom of our Nation hath been studying and devising ever since the Beginning of the Reformation, to reform the Enormities and Corruptions of the Ecclesiastical Courts, but all in vain and to no purpose, while the Business of Judicial Absolution and Excommunication, judicial remitting and retaining Sins is kept up; for this is a Monster, a Complication of heinous Sins incapable of being reformed without being abolished. Good Bishop Joseph Hall in his *Modest Offer*, confesseth to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, *I should be a flatterer of the times past (which is not often seen) if I should take upon me to justify, or approve of all the Carriages of some that have been entrusted with the Keyes of Ecclesiastical Government: or to blanch over the Corruptions of Consistorial Officers, in both these, there was Fault enough, to ground both a Complaint, and Reformation. — As for Matter of Censures, it may not be denied, that there hath been great*

Roffens.  
affers.  
Luther.  
Confut.  
art. 24.

*Abuse in the Managing of them, both upon Ecclesiastical Persons, and others: Suspension of Ministers upon slight, and insufficient Causes, both ab Officio, & Beneficio, hath been too rise in some Places of latter times; and the dreadfull Sentence of Excommunication hath too frequently, and familiarly passed upon Light and triviall Matters; How happy were it, if a speedy Course may be taken for the Prevention of this Evil; In the Conference at Hampton-Court, a Motion was strongly made to this purpose, but without Effect. Here this excellent and godly Bishop calls it the dreadfull Sentence of Excommunication, and for ought I can perceive, it is commonly so counted, and this Opinion seems much to prevail. But Luther in the Beginning of the Reformation soundly asserts against the Papists, that Christians are to love rather than fear Excommunication. For either Excommunication is a Gospel-Ordinance, or not. If yea, it cannot but participate of the Nature of the Gospel, and be good, lovely, precious, desirable, as all Gospel-Ordinances are to the Faith of God's People, either all Gospel-Ordinances are so, or none. Gospel-Excommunication is not a Punishment, but a Medicine for a wounded Soul: it doth not in its own Nature kill, but cure: it doth not destroy, but heal, if the criminal Christian wisely consider and lay it to Heart, and profit by it, as he ought. If indeed he contemn the Evangelical Sentence, and go on in Sin incurably, this is very dreadfull, but the Evangelical Sentence in its own Nature is not dreadfull, but good, lovely, precious Truth tending to his Spiritual Profit, to kill his Sins and save his Soul. So that the Dreadfulness lyes in the Man's own Wilfulness and Obstinacy in Sin, and consequent eternal Damnation, and not in the Evangelical Sentence applyed for his cure, as a gracious Means to soften his Heart, and destroy his Sins, and heal his Soul. If Excommunication be not a Gospel-Ordinance, then I confess it can have no Evangelical Loveliness and Preciousness in it: but what Sentence is it, if it be not Evangelical, if it be of a killing rather than of a curing Nature, if it tend to damn and not to save? If really it tend to damn and not to save, the Devil, and not God is Author of it, it is plainly Anti-Evangelical, fundamentally corrupt, and to be had in Detestation by all Christian People. And this is the very Nature of all the Judicial Excommunications Decreed in the Bishops Courts, they are not Evangelical Sentences tending to kill Sin, to save the Soul, to edifie God's People. For if so they were they could stand of themselves, and the Bishops-Court could stand of it self by its own Goodness, Innocency, Piety, Purity, Usefulness, and by the Arm of God without the temporal Sword to uphold it. For the temporal Sword doth not uphold God, but God doth uphold the temporal Sword in the Hand of Cesar. But the Bishops-Court being void of Gospel-Goodness, Gentleness, Meekness, Purity, Piety and Christian Equity, and unable to subsist without external*

external Force and Violence, it gets it self armed with the Imprisoning Writ and terrible Civil Sanctions, and by this means keeps the Nation in slavish Awe, to the Grief of all good Men, who see and are sensible of its Enormities, Oppressions, Extortions, Profaneness, Hypocrisie, Papal Domination, Fraud and Injustice, but cannot reform them.

CHAP. 56. That which gave Occasion to *Luther* to begin the happy Reformation in Germany, was, the Sale of Papal Indulgences for Money: Now the like thing is done and upheld by the Law of *England* in the Bishops Courts in Commutation of Penance. But herein the Papists seem to be more Honest and Consistent with themselves than our Bishops Courts. For the Papists ground their Sale of Papal Indulgences for Money upon the Doctrine of Purgatory, confessing that if there be no Purgatory, there can be no Place for those Indulgences. But we have abolished the Doctrine of Purgatory, and yet retain the Practice of Selling Spiritual Indulgences (as they are called) for Money. Rich Delinquents, though Penitent, can have no Pardon, no Spiritual Indulgence without Commutation-Money: poor Delinquents, though Penitent, can have no Pardon or Spiritual Indulgence, because they have not Money to buy it, but must do Penance. Thus Peace with God, and with the Church of God, is bought and sold for Money, the Bishop by our Laws is Judge in the Case, either he or his Vicar in Spirituals. But I would gladly learn, if the Bishop himself be Criminal, what must be done with him? We know *Aaron* the High Priest committed great and scandalous Sin in making an Idol for the People, and one of Christs Apostles was *Judas* the Traitor, a most infamous Wretch; and another of the Apostles, even *Peter*, did very Sadly and scandalously Deny and abjure Christ. The Bishop of *Rome* and the Cardinals and Provincial Papal Arch-Bishops and Diocesan Papal Bishops have made themselves very Criminal before God and his Church. When thus it is, shall it be in the Power of these infamous Criminals to pardon themselves without Gospel-Repentance? Do but shew what Way God hath appointed for a criminal and scandalous Apostle, and Bishop, to obtain Pardon and Peace with God, and with the Church of God, and the same will serve for every other Criminal: for as to Spiritual and Internal Matters there is no Difference between one and another. Here the Higheston on Earth, and the Highest in the Church are no Judges, but Parties judged by God according to his Word, which Word assureth free and full Pardon without Money, and without Price, to Rich and Poor, High and Low, one and another, without Respect of Persons upon Gospel-Repentance, but not without Gospel-Repentance: and Gospel-Repentance is the same thing with Gospel-Penance, they are but two Names for the same thing. And if Bishops and

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art. 18.*

their Courts can for a Sum of Money commute Gospel-Repentance, and excuse criminal Christians, for sordid Lucre, from giving glory to God, and profiting their own Souls, and edifying the Congregation by wholsom Confession of Sin, then they can dispense with God's Law, and alter the Gospel, and make a new Way to Heaven. King *David* having committed enormous and scandalous Sin in the Matter of *Uriah*, did not think himself too good or too great to make publick Gospel-Penance, but he penned the fifty first Psalm; and gave it to be sung openly in the Congregation, at once publishing his Shame, and his Repentance, and by his eminent Repentance he hath honoured God far more than he dishonoured him by Sin. And our famous Bishop *Jewel*, before he was Bishop, having by Subscribing to Popery wounded his Conscience, and scandalized the Church, he could have no Spiritual Peace till with godly Sorrow and weeping Eyes his own Mouth made publick Confession of his Sin before all the Congregation of English Exiles in *Germany*, to the great Glory of God, and the Edification of all good Men. These are no arbitrary and indifferent Matters, but things of very great Weight and Necessity: they are no judicial Causes to be transacted in a Mercenary and Papal Court, but Spiritual Duties consisting by the Gospel. As for standing in a white Sheet, and the like humane Devices, there is no Necessity of them. But giving Glory to God and Edifying the Congregation by necessary Penitential Confession of Sin, this no Power on Earth can dispense with. Either therefore publick Gospel-Penance is due by God's Law, or not. If yea, it cannot be commuted, the Commutation-Money is very wickedness, and God's Curse cannot but go along with it, and both Giver and Taker agree together to dishonour God, and hurt their Souls. If not, then there can be no Place for Commutation; and so all Commutation of Gospel-Penance is utterly unlawfull.

**CHAP. 57.** It is the Fault of our National Government, that doth not appoint to the Bishops-Court some civil compulsory Process in stead of judicial Excommunication. I cannot think that our Ecclesiastical Judges being Protestants, would use this Way of Judicial Excommunication, if they could otherwise bring their Sentences to effect. That which many Complain of, that it is in the Power of Lay-Chancellors, and not of Clergy-Men in these Courts, to Decree Spiritual Censures, is in my Opinion either no Fault, or not the Principal thing. For the Court is really a Temporal Court by Authority derived from the Queen and Parliament, and therefore I think that a Lay-Man is the fittest to be Judge thereof, or very tolerably fit. But the main *Gravamen* is the Way of Judicial remitting and retaining Sins, judicial Absolution and Excommunication; for this is the incommunicable Right of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we could suppose it done by all the Apostles, it could not

not but be intolerable Usurpation and Presumption. A learned Man in Defence of the Bishops-Court says to this purpose: *Is not this Reciprocall then, those that are bound in Heaven, should upon due Conviction, be bound on Earth, and those that are so bound on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven?* This being granted, it is utterly insufficient for your Cause; for here the Question is not, whether those who are bound in Heaven, are to be bound on Earth; but *de modo* how this is to be done? & whether God hath appointed this particular Way of doing it, which we in *England* have? The Sins of *Herod*, and *Pontius Pilate*, and the wicked *Jews* and *Gentiles* who arraigned, condemned, mocked, scourged *Christ*, and led him to Execution, were bound in Heaven; was it therefore the Duty of *Christ* to set up a worldly and temporal Court, and sit Judge therein, and cite them by an Apparitor to appear before him, in Order to their Conviction, that so their Sins being bound in Heaven, might also be bound on Earth, and being bound on Earth, might be reciprocally bound in Heaven? *Paul* dwelt two whole Years in his own hired House at *Rome*, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those Things which concern the Lord *Jesus Christ*, with all Confidence, no Man forbidding him. Here the Emperour, the Senate, the Magistracy, and greater Part of the City were open Heathens and Idolaters, their Sins were bound in Heaven. Was it therefore *Paul's* Duty to set up a ludicrous Ecclesiastical Court, and sit Judge therein, and by an Apparitor command the Pagan Emperour and Senate with the rest to appear before him, that being convicted, and proving Contumacious, their Sins might be bound on Earth answerably to their being bound in Heaven?

CHAP. 58. King *Pharaoh* and his *Egyptian* Subjects were Idolatrous Heathens, Enemies of God and his People, cruel Oppressors, their Sins were bound in Heaven. Why did not *Moses* and *Aaron* set up a Consistory-Court, and sit Judges therein, and cite those Enemies of God and his People to appear before them, that being convicted, their Sins might be bound on Earth as well as in Heaven? The *French* Popish King sets up Popish Arch-Bishops and Bishops in his Realm, and these Combine together, and persecute God's faithfull Servants, and lay wast the true Church, and think they do God Service in killing his innocent People: the Sins of these Idolatrous and persecuting Arch-Bishops and Bishops and their King are bound in Heaven; Must there now be set up a worldly and temporal Disciplinary Court in *France*, with Power judicially to cite the Idolatrous persecuting King and Arch-Bishops and Bishops to appear in Court, in Order to having their Sins bound on Earth as well as in Heaven? who shall set up this Court? where is there a Commission from God to do it? Certainly remitting and retaining Sins is a Matter of the highest Consequence, either this is a meer Spiritual Master,

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pag. 177.

Matter, or there is no such thing as Spirituality? And if God hath appointed Matters purely Spiritual, of everlasting Consequence, to be transacted in a worldly Court, after a worldly Manner, and it be his Will that Judicial remitting and retaining Sins, be nothing but State-policy and Papal Domination, then we must needs conclude that Christ's Kingdom is of this World, and that he is but another *Mahomet*, and there is no difference between the Bible and the Alcoran.

*CHAP. 39.* There is great Difference between the Things of God and the Things of Cesar, the Internal and the External Court, Evangelical Justice and Civil Justice. *In foro externo & Civili* it is possible for an innocent Man upon the full Testimony of three false Witnesses, not known to be so, to be convicted of Murder, and be hanged, and yet the Judge and Jury and Hang-Man not faulty. But it is otherwise as to Spiritual Judicature: for though the Man be legally convicted *in foro Civili*, yet he protesting his Innocency, we cannot absolutely retain his Sins. We are to say, If indeed these three Witnesses have sworn true, and thou be guilty of this Fact, then thy Sins are bound in Heaven, and we the true Church of God do by Authority and Commission from him bind thy Sins on Earth. But if really thou be innocent, and truly godly in Christ, then thy Sins are loosed in Heaven, and we by Commission from God do loose them on Earth: and though thou die as a Criminal, upon the false Testimony of these three Men, who cannot for the present be discredited, yet both thy Soul and thy good Name are in safe keeping with God, who will one Day clear thy Innocency and confound thine Adversaries. Thus here is an apparent Difference between the Gospel and Civil Judicature, as between Heaven and Earth, the Things of God and the Things of Cesar; this fundamental Distinction being overthrown, a wide Door is opened for practical - Atheism. Now the Constitution of the Bishops-Court is fundamentally corrupt, because it turneth Spiritual Matters into meer Civil Policy, and sets up a Judicial Absolution and Excommunication *in foro externo* contrary to the Gospel, absolving those whom God doth condemn, condemning those whom he doth acquit, and this it doth *in nomine Dei, pro Salute anime, & pro reformatione morum*. As for Personal Abuses of a lawfull Office I do not insist on them: for the most innocent Office cannot secure it self from Male-administration when it comes to be in the Hands of bad Men. But here the very Constitution is naught, and cannot be reformed without being abolished. The 33th Article of the Church of England, is in these Words: *That Person, which by open Denunciation of the Church is right cut of from the Unity of the Church, and Excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole Multitude of the Faithfull, as an Heathen, and Publican, untill he be openly reconciled by Penance, and received into the Church by a Judge, that hath Authority thereto.* Now the Bishops-Court takes it self to be Judge in

in Excommunication-Cases, only there is Liberty of Appeal to the Arch-Bishops Court. But either you will be impartial and upright in decreeing this Sentence, or not. If not, then you are self-condemned, and merit Excommunication, and there will need another Court to Excommunicate you, and another after that, and so on *in infinitum*. If you will be impartial and upright without Respect of Persons, then the Number will be intolerable, the Nation cannot beare it, the Church will be in confusion through the Frequency of Excommunication, and the vast Numbers of Persons Excommunicate.

**CHAP. 60.** If the Bishops Courts had but the Imprisoning Writ at pleasure, we may rationally apprehend that *England* would be like the *Spanish* Inquisition, and soon perceive the dismal Effects of their exorbitant Power more then now it doth. That Writ cannot be had and executed but at an excessive and intolerable Charge, and when it is out it is apt to meet with unwelcom Stops and Delays, which is the reason why it is not more common. Were it common, the Nation could not subsist. *And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto Mat. 18. the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an 17. Heathen Man and a Publican.* He doth not say, let him be unto thee in worse Case than an Heathen Man and a Publican. But, *let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican.* And must all Heathens and Publicans be excluded from their natural and civil Rights, and Imprisoned? Was it the Duty of Christ in his State of Humiliation, and of his Disciples, to take the Sword in Hand, and depose the Heathen Roman Emperour, and his Deputy *Pontius Pilate*, and lay them in Prison, and tread God's Ordinance of Magistracy under Foot, and turn the World into confusion? Are not Idolatry, Whoredom, Adultery, Drunkenness, Ungodliness in a King the same Sins as in a Subject? Is the Subject lyable to be dealt with after an Evangelical Manner by good Doctrine for his Soul's good, and not also the Civil Sovereign? If the Civil Sovereign be by Profession a Christian, and afterward like *Julian* the Apostate revolt from Christianity, and openly Profess himself a Heathen, and shut himself out of the Church of God, and be irreclaimable, the true Church of God cannot but judge him to be what really he is, and openly professeth himself to be an Apostate, a very Heathen, cut off from all Spiritual Priviledges and Evangelical Blessings. But still he remains a Man, a Husband, a Parent, an Emperour, and the Rights of a Man, a Husband, a Parent, an Emperour remain to him, the Spiritual Censure doth not deprive him of these, or infringe these, but rather it doth establish them. The Case is the very same as to a common Subject. If therefore the Bishops-Court be a Spiritual Court, as it pretends to be, it can subsist only by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which Word is not capable of being

being beholden to Cesar, but the lawfull Supremacy of Cesar is upheld by the Word of God soundly believed and observed by good Christians especially, who are Cesar's best Subjects. But if that Court be no Spiritual Court, let it lay aside its Hypocrisy, and call its Spiritual Censures Spiritual Wickedness, and pretend no longer to act *in nomine Dei, & pro salute anima, & pro reformatione morum*, but honestly repent of these Lies and vile Pretences, and leave Spiritual Censures to God, and to the Holy Church Universal Militant on Earth, and to Christ dwelling in the Hearts of his Saints by Faith, and to his holy Word in the Mouth of Pastors and Teachers after a Spiritual Manner.

CHAP. 61. Mr. B. says, *I desire you, Sir, to prove if you can, that use of indifferent things, which the established Church enjoins, is a Superstitious use of them. But you did not offer at the Proof of this, because you know 'twas impossible to make it out.* p. 156. As you desire the Proof of this if we can, so I desire that you and your Partakers will patiently hear what I have to say touching this Matter. I shall limit my present Discourse to the Cross in Baptism. For my part I think the use of this humane Ceremony in Baptism inconvenient, but not unlawfull; being enjoined, it is in my Opinion a tolerable Inconvenience, and no just Ground of Separation. But how that which you call the established Church can impose the use of this Ceremony under a severe Penalty, without being guilty of Superstition, or some other Sin as bad, if not worse, I for my part do not see. For either you impose it as both lawfull and expedient, or as barely lawfull, but not expedient. 1. If you impose it as both lawfull and expedient, is not this in Effect to say that Baptism as Christ ordained it, and as the Apostles and primitive Christians recorded in Scripture for a Pattern to Posterity, used it without the Cross, is lawfull, but not expedient, not sufficiently decent, comely, pure, edifying, pleasing to God? and what is this but Superstition? 2. If you impose it as barely lawfull, but not as expedient, then with what Conscience and Equity can you impose upon all God's Ministers in the Nation under a severe Penalty, a thing which you confess to be inexpedient?

CHAP. 62. The Liturgy speaking of Ceremonies, *why some be abolished, and some retained*, it says, *some are put away, because the great excess and multitude of them hath so increased in these latter Days, that the Burden of them was intolerable.* Now seeing humane Ceremonies may become intolerable by being excessively too many, there must needs be some Divine Rule by the Observing whereof this intolerable Evil may be thoroughly cured and remedied, and that can be only the true Doctrine of Ceremonies. For as is the Doctrine, so is the Ceremony: if the Doctrine be good, the Ceremony is good: if the Doctrine be bad, the Ceremony is bad. But when the Cross is imposed

posed and used as necessary and expedient, and you think you please God, and doe him Service in Silencing, Suspending and Depriving all such Ministers as shall conscientiously, meekly and peaceably Scruple the using of it, and Declaring their publick Consent to use it, and thereupon shall refuse Conformity to it, here the Doctrine of the Cross is plainly bad and Superstitious, and a Snare to the Consciences of the Imposers, and of those that use it in this Sense, and under this Conception. For upon the same Principle it is necessary and expedient to impose an intolerable Multitude of Ceremonies in Baptism, till the very Substance thereof be evacuated. The Conjunction of a humane Ceremony with a Divine Ceremony is plainly needless and inexpedient. Now Baptism is a Divine Ceremony, and the Cross is a humane Ceremony: and therefore the Conjunction of it with Baptism, and Imposing it under a severe Penalty, cannot but be Sin, a Complication of many Sins.

CHAP. 63. Though the Cross in Baptism be supposed in it self a small Matter: yet the true Doctrine thereof is not small, but it is Precious, Evangelical, Divine and of great weight. It is not a Circumstance of Baptism, but a needless and inexpedient Ceremony. Baptism cannot be done without Words and Water, without Time and Place, without some Gesture and some Vesture, there is a Necessity of all these. But all these and whatsoever is requisite and necessary to render Baptism solemn, decent, grave, orderly, comly, laudable, edifying, perfect before God and his Church, may well be without the Cross, and the Addition of it doth rather lessen than increase the Glory and Beauty of Baptism. The same reasons which render it needless and inexpedient in the Lord's Supper, (wherein our Law doth not impose it) do no less prove it needless and inexpedient in Baptism. What is Superstition but conceiting this or that to be Duty or Sin, which is not so? Baptism without the Cross, as Christ ordained it, as the Apostles used and delivered it to the primitive Christians, not so decent comly, orderly, edifying, beautifull as with the Cross? And when you have such a Zeal for this needless and superfluous Thing, as to impose it under a severe Penalty upon all Churches in the Kingdom, and conceit that in so doing you please God, and do him Service, is not this Erroneous Zeal for God? and is not Erroneous Zeal for God, Superstition? If you should barely use it your selves as necessary and expedient precedently to humane Law, towards such as do not desire it, it could not but be Superstition. But when over and besides you impose it under a severe Penalty upon others, this is greater Superstition, or some other Sin as bad, or worse.

CHAP. 64. Bishop *Sanderson* in his first Sermon *ad Clerum* pag. 12. Edit. 6. tells us, this one Distinction of Doctrinal and Obediential necessity,

*well weighed and rightly applied, is of it self sufficient to clear all Doubts. But the Scripture hath not this Distinction, it is meerly Arbitrary and Atheological, and being well weighed it destroys it self. For it contains an Implication, that precedently to humane Law and Imposition there is no necessity of the Cross in Baptism, it is altogether needless: being so, it ought not to be imposed, the Law which doth impose it is Criminal. He that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the Fear of God. But what Fear of God and Evangelical Justice can be in those, who do under a severe Penalty impose upon God's Ministers and People a certain Ceremony in Baptism, which they themselves confess to be altogether needless, and continue so to do? for my Part I cannot think so of our Rulers. Christian Charity binds me to believe, that in their Judgment the Cross in Baptism is not barely lawfull, but necessary, decent, comly, expedient, fit, usefull to Edification: and that if they could be otherwise convinced they would quickly revoke the Imposition. And though herein I think they are mistaken, and that their Conscience being weak is defiled with Superstition; yet I think it very possible for a godly Man to be defiled with some unperceived Superstition, and to live in it all his Days, and yet be saved upon a general sound Repentance of all unknown Sins and Errors: for a particular Repentance cannot be of every particular lesser Errour, Defect, Mistake.*

*CHAP. 65. Mr. Bennet says, He that professes and maintains the fundamental Christian Doctrines and the Essentials of Christian Worship, but divides and separates from other Persons who profess and maintain the same; is a Christian; I confess, or a Part of Christ's mystical Body; but he is a divided Part. p. 143. It is plain that the mystical Body of Christ consists only of living Members: a Christian not sincere is no living Member thereof, and therefore simply he is no Part thereof. As a Finger cut off from the Hand, is thereby cut off from the whole Body, and is no longer a vital Part thereof, but a dissected dead Thing; so a Christian professing all Fundamentals, but not sincere in his Profession, is inwardly no Christian, but an Infidel or Hypocrite, inwardly disjoined from Christ and his whole mystical Body, and inwardly joined to the Synagogue of Satan. But if he be sincere and constant in his Profession, certainly he is vitally joined to Christ and to every Part of his mystical Body, and is not divided from it in any Thing fundamental, and necessary to the Being and Unity of the Church. An ungodly Christian may be a Part and Member of this or that particular Church; because it sufficeth to constitute one a Part and Member of a particular Church, if he cohabit and be a Christian outwardly. But no Man can be a vital Member of the universal Church, the mystical Body of Christ, unless he be truly godly in Christ Jesus.*

*CHAP. 66. Mr. B. says, Whatever some Men think, Ecclesiastical Divisions*

*Divisions are not contemptible Matters. The Sinfulness of them is manifest to every Person that reads the Scriptures. And besides, our own Experience has convinced us of the numberless Mischiefs, which religious Quarrels have wrought in this Nation. 'Tis not difficult to demonstrate, that all our late and present Calamities, do owe their Birth to these Spiritual Contests: and that our civil Misfortunes will never end, till our Church's Wounds are healed.*

*The Preface.* I am far from thinking Ecclesiastical Divisions to be contemptible Matters. Our Saviour's Words must needs be true, a Kingdom, a City, a House, a Church divided against it self, cannot stand. The Church of God really is not the Church of God without some Degree of Christian Unity. But where is a cordial Agreement in all Fundamentals, there can be no Anti-Fundamental, Soul-Destroying, Church-ruining Schism, though there may by a lesser kind of Schism among Saints themselves and those that agree in the Foundation. Say all that in truth you can of the Evil and Mischief of Church-Divisions, I will readily concur with you therein, thereby you disadvantage your own Cause, and are overcome with your own Weapons. For if the Dissenters are guilty of Criminal Schism, for Non-Conformity to things indifferent in God's Service in your Judgment, but sinfull in their Judgment: you are more guilty of Criminal Schism by rigid imposing those unnecessary Things as Terms of Church-Union and Communion. Turn you, Mr. Benner, which way you will, and make the best you can of your Cause, this will be found a truth, if the Dissenters be guilty, you are more guilty: if they fall, you cannot but more fall. It is not meer general invectives against the Evil and Mischiefs of Schism, that will heal the Church's Wounds. But the true Nature of the Wounds is to be known and clearly stated, and by whom those Wounds are caused, and what is the proper Cause thereof. When this is known, the Cure and Remedy will be very obvious, let the Cause cease, and the Effect will cease. Take away those Things that wound the Church, and the Wound will presently be healed, Health and Beauty, Strength and Glory will naturally ensue. Only by Pride cometh Contention, Prov. 13. 10. then let Pride be put away, and Christian Humility come in its Room, and Church-Contention and Church-Division will naturally cease. But while Pride is kept up, Schism and Contention is unavoidable. So then, neither is he that planteth any Thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase. 1 Cor. 3. 7. This is the Voice of Faith in humble and lowly minded Paul. Though Paul who planteth be an Eminent Apostle, and Apollos who watereth be an Eminent Evangelist, yet they are but Ministers by whom the Saints believe, even as the Lord gave to every Man. And therefore in planting and watering the Church, in the Conversion of Sinners, in edifying the Saints, in Ordination, in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in ruling the Church according to the Scripture, in remitting the Sins of the Penitent, and in retali-

ing the Sins of the Impenitent, *Paul and Apollos, Peter and John, Luther and Calvin, the Apostle, the Bishop, the Presbyter*, is not any thing, but God that giveth the Blessing and increase is *all in all*, and *worketh all in all*. If this one Truth were well learned and reduced to Holy Practice, it would quickly heal all our Breaches. For when God is all in all Ordinations, Sermons, Sacraments, Church-Decrees, Censures, what can there be to hinder Holy Concord? And what is it that keeps God from being *all in all*? Certainly it is Pride. Pride opposeth, and though in Words it may say that God is all in all: yet in deeds it doth deny him, and will needs have the Church ruled partly by God as Supreme, and partly by the Apostles and their Successors as Subordinate. And thus God is but partly God, and the Church of God is but partly the Church of God, and it is at Men's courtesie whether God shall be God or no. *That Person, which by open Denunciation of the Church is right cut off from the Unity of the Church, and Excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole Multitude of the Faithfull, as an Heathen, and Publican; untill he be openly reconciled by Penance, and received into the Church by a Judge, that hath Authority thereto.* This is the 33d Article of the Church of England, equally Subscribed by both Parties. Unto what is already said about Excommunication, let me have leave to add a Word or two more, Mr. *Bennet*, before you and I part, because so much Weight lyes upon this Point of being cut off from the Unity of the Church, or continuing therein.

**CHAP. 67.** Here the Article doth suppose this or that Criminal Christian by open Denunciation of the Church, right cut off from the Unity of the Church, and Excommunicated. Now it is evident that the Church by open Denunciation of God's Holy Truth, doth not cut him off from the Unity of the Church, but doth by Authority derived from Christ denounce and declare him already cut off by his own Sin. For the Unity of the Church consists in Christian Faith and Hope and Love, conjoyning the Soul to Christ the Head, and to his mystical Body the Church, and to every Part thereof, and giving the Soul Right to all such Blessings and Favours as be necessary to the Being of a godly Christian. And what can deprive a Man of Spiritual Blessings, of saving Grace, of Christian Faith and Hope and Love, and consequent Pardon and eternal Life, but only his own Sin, and Obstinacy therein? An innocent Christian may *de facto* be falsely accused, slandered, fined, imprisoned, banished, whipped, tortured, mocked, reproached, misused, killed and murdered: but an innocent Christian cannot *de facto* be cut off from the Unity of the Church. For the Church is the mystical Body of Christ, the Universal Society of real Saints, embracing in its Bosom with most intimate Affection every innocent Christian. And therefore none but the false Church and the Synagogue of Satan, doth cut off an innocent Christian from the Unity of God's Church: but by this

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Anti-Christian Sentence persisted in, the false Church & Synagogue of Satan doth cut it self off from Christ, and his Body mystical, and true Hope of Salvation, and not the innocent Christian. *Blessed are ye when Men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their Company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your Name as Evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoyce ye in that Day, and leap for Joy; for behold, your Reward is great in Heaven; for in the like manner did their Fathers unto the Prophets. Luk: 6.* Moreover, these Words, untill he be openly reconciled by Penitance, and received into the Church by a Judge, that hath Authority thereto, doth not imply that untill he be openly so reconciled, and received into the Church by a visible and external Judge Authorized, the Man is to be taken of the whole Multitude of the Faithfull, as an Heathen, and Publican, and so dying is to be thought damned for ever? But what visible and external Judge hath God appointed in his Church for this Matter? Certainly none but God can judicially remit Sins and receive Persons into the Church, and this he doth by giving them Faith and Repentance, and consequent Remission of Sins. Apostles themselves had no Judicial Authority to receive Persons into the Church, but only doctrinal, stewardly and ministerial Authority to teach and baptize, and to remit the Sins of the Penitent, and so to declare those reconciled and received into the Church, that were before upon their cordial Repentance reconciled and received by God himself. Reconciliation of true Penitents and Receiving into the Church, doth not hang upon the Sentence of an external and visible Judge, but upon the gracious Sentence of God and the Lord Jesus the eternal and invisible Judge. So that if God give this or that Sinner Repentance and Remission of Sins, presently without any more he is reconciled to God, and he is already admitted and received into the Bosom of the Universal Church, and if there be any Sentence of Excommunication against him, it is of no Validity in God's true Church, save only for the Condemnation of them who curse those whom God doth bleis, and damn those whom he doth save, and count those Heathens and Publicans and Children of the Devil, whom God doth count his dear Children, real Saints, and Coheirs with Jesus Christ.

CHAP. 68. That which deceiveth Persons herein seems to be this, an Erroneous conceit that *besides* the Universal Church there are particular Churches of Saints, which cannot be. For the Universal Church is the whole Number of blessed Saints in Heaven, and of Militant Saints on Earth: besides this whole Number of Saints it is impossible that there should be a Saint upon Earth, or a Church of Saints. For though there are Millions of particular Churches of Saints on Earth, yet not *besides* the Universal Church, that Word *besides* is utterly atheological. Therefore all particular Churches of Saints besides the Universal Church, are only Congregations.

gations of Hypocrites, unsound Christians, there is not one godly Christian among them. The Church of England considered as distinct from the Universal Church Militant on Earth, is only the Society of those in England that are Hypocrites, ungodly Christians, professing Love to Christ and his Church, but lacking godly Sincerity, inwardly Hating Christ and all godly Christians. Thus those only are valid Ordinations, which the Universal Church taught by Christ, and following the infallible Guidance of his Word, doth pronounce to be valid, The Universal Church ruled by Christ doth not curse any that belong to him, doth not approve remitting the Sins of the Impenitent, and retaining the Sins of the Penitent, but doth alike condemn both; and all such Bishops, Arch-Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors and Ecclesiastical Judges as seek their own, and not the Things of Christ, and govern themselves by the earthly, sensual and devilish Wisdom, rather than by the supernal Wisdom which is first pure, and then peaceable, the Universal Church on Earth doth condemn, they are all of them Haters of God and his Saints, and lyable every Moment to endless Perdition. As Noah by Faith was wise and wary for his Soul, and prepared an Ark for the saving of himself and his Household, *by the which he condemned the World, Heb. 11 7.* So now every godly Man and Woman by Faith chusing the Way of Truth, and walking therein, doth condemn the World, and censure all unregenerate Princes, Magistrates, Bishops, Presbyters, Lay-Men, even all ungodly Ones in City and Countrey to be what really they are, unregenerate and ungodly, Children of the Devil, Plagues of the Church, Enemies of God, Heirs of Hell; this is a Spiritual Censure and Sentence grounded on God's Holy Word, and thus we rightly binding their Sins on Earth, God doth bind them in Heaven. But this Spiritual Censure is no Punishment, neither Temporal, nor Eternal. Those Words, *Sufficient to such a Man is this Punishment, which was inflicted of many, 2 Cor. 3. 6.* are in our old Translation thus rendred, *It is Sufficient unto the same Man, that he was rebuked of many.* This seems to be the better Translation; for the rebuke passed on the incestuous Christian at Corinth, was purely Medicinal, and by Grace had a happy Effect upon his Soul, it was a Sentence Evangelical, and not Judicial.

### The Conclusion.

**I**N all Breaches between God and Man, Man is ever in all the Fault, and God is altogether just and innocent. But in Breaches between Man and Man not seldom there is Fault on both sides, and those which have the better Cause may erre and do amiss through Mismanagement. As in the Dispute between Job and his three Friends, God in the End gives Sentence on Job's side, he had the better Cause,

Cause; and yet in some Things *Job* erred, and did not maintain his Innocency and vindicate the Truth against his Opponents, without some unadvised Speeches and passionate Expressions favouring of Impatience and Discontent, and indirect Reflection upon God himself, for which *Job* upon Conviction doth humble himself, confess his Sin, and appease the Divine Clemency. And though in the Breach between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Paul* seems to have had the better Cause; yet it is possible that *Paul* might erre by too much Sharpness. For it is said, *The Contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.* But if *Paul* erred by too much Sharpness against *Mark*, and *Barnabas* his good Uncle, he made full Amends and Reparation by that Passage, *Aristarchus my Fellow-Prisoner Salutesh you, and Marcus Sisters Son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received Commandments; if he come unto you, receive him.) Col. 4. 10.* Here *Paul* and *Mark* did happily Unite, and the Breach was thoroughly healed.

Many Years ago there was in a certain Place, (which for Peace sake I forbear to name) a very numerous and flourishing Congregation of Church-Men and Dissenters amicably concurring in publick Worship, which afterward came to be broken and divided upon this Occasion. The Conforming Pastor refused to give the Lord's-Supper to those that were not free to take it kneeling. This occasioned the Setting up a separate Meeting, which hath continued to this Day. Here I think both sides were in an Errour. The Minister sinned by excluding conscientious Christians from their Right, he ought to have put on the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, and have given them the Sacrament in some other Gesture, such as they were free to take it in, and it may be by such Mildness and Condescension they themselves in time upon removal of their Scruples, would of their own accord have received kneeling. On the other Hand to me it is competently plain that kneeling in the Act of receiving the Lords-Supper is lawful, and those I think erre and judge amils who judge it unlawfull, and I conceive that Separation from the Communion of Saints in the Lord's Supper, for this or any other the like Cause, is unwarrantable. *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the Words of eternal Life, Joh. 6.* While Christ doth stay with a People, and afford his Converting, Edifying and Comforting presence, we are to stay with them. But he doth not withdraw his Converting, Edifying and Comforting presence, barely because of some tolerable Defects and Inconveniences. For if it be our Duty to separate from this or that Christian Congregation in publick Worship, barely because of tolerable Defects and Inconveniences, then it is our Duty to separate from all Christian Congregations upon Earth, and there can be no Church - Society and Communion publickly, because no Christian Congregation can be found wholly free from all tolerable Defects and Inconveniences. As our Rulers are not

not to be severe with us for tolerable Weaknesses & Defects: so we are to shew like Mildness and Gentleness towards them, and not rigidly Censure every small Fault and tolerable Defect in them, and make it a ground of Separation from one another in the necessary Duties of God's Worship. In Personal Reformation, in Family-Reformation, in Church-Reformation, in State-Reformation, good Men do not always what they would, but what they can, & what the present State of Things will permit. And this I verily think was the Case of our first Reformers, in the Reign of blessed King Edward the Sixth: considering the State of those times, the Minority of that good King, the great Numbers of Papists, and the long Inveteracy of Popish Idolatry and Superstition in the Realm, we may rather wonder that the Reformation was in any Measure pure, than that it was not more pure. But too many of the Conforming Clergy greatly prejudice their own Cause, they do not labour in the Word and Doctrine, they are not exemplary in their Lives, they do not exercise due Tenderness and Condescension toward the Dissenters, they rather drive them from them than draw them to them, they seek their own and not the Things of Christ, they rule by Rigor and not by Equity, they over-conform and come exceeding short of their Brethren, many of their own Way, in the unquestionable Duties of Godliness, exemplary Walking, ministerial Diligence and Fidelity, Love to Souls; true Zeal for God and the weightier Matters of God's Law is consumed by perverse Zeal for needless Things imposed by Man's Law. Gideon was certainly a holy Man, and crowned by God with extraordinary Success against the Enemies of God and his People: and yet Gideon greatly erred in making the Ephod, and putting it in his City; and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a Snare to Gideon, and to his House. *Judg. 8. 27.* We may well think that many even godly Persons in our Nation, both of the Conforming Clergy and Layety, like Gideon, have had, and still have, erroneous Zeal for the things in question, which Zeal hath been, and still is a Snare to them, and to our Nation. Jehosaphat was a very godly Man, an eminent reforming King: and yet in his time one necessary Part of Reformation was omitted, not so much through him, as through a prevailing Party of his Subjects, whose Hearts were not prepared for their God. *Honbeit the high Places were not taken away; for as yet the People had not prepared their Hearts unto the God of their Fathers. 2 Chr. 20. 33.* Those high Places wherein they Sacrificed to Idols were taken away by the good Kings of Judah. But there remained other high Places, wherein the People did Sacrifice still, yet unto the Lord their God onely, *2 Chr. 33. 17.* these also ought to have been put away: for they were forbidden by God's Law, they were Provocative in his sight, Causes of Schism, Snares to Souls and did much hurt: and yet they were kept up in Judah for many Hundreds of Years, even in the Reigns of very pious and eminent reforming Kings, till blessed King Josiah to his immortal Praise took them all away. When the Ruling and Ruled ones in England have prepared their Hearts for God, and cleansed themselves from those inward Corruptions that blind their Judgments, then the things in question will go down, and so Schism will cease and have an End. It should be our Joy if our People do well, and edify themselves better under another's Ministry than under our own. O that we could excell in Christian love, and strive with Holy Emulation to out do one another in the true Fear of God, and in doing all good Offices to each other! *The Lord turned the Captivity of Job, when he prayed for his Friends, Job 42. 10.* not while he disputed with them, but when he prayed for them. And yet it is our great Duty to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, and there are some, whose Mouths must be stopped. *Tir. 3. 11.*



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